

IN THE WAY OF  
THE SAINTS

GERALDINE E. HODGSON



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In the way of the saints

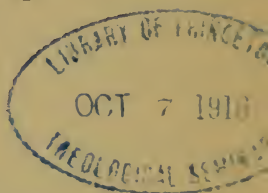




# IN THE WAY OF THE SAINTS

BY

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## NOTE

THE second and fourth chapters, save for some slight revision and expansion, were delivered as Addresses to the members of the Annual Meeting of the Girls' Diocesan Association, held in Oxford, during the Long Vacation of 1912.

In the hope that they might be of some use to other young students of the Way of the Saints, and that their original inadequacy might be, in some measure, mended, the other portions of the book are added.

I offer my thanks to John Lane, Esq., for his kind permission to quote the lines on pp. 61, 62 from Mr. Stephen Phillips' *New Poems*.

G. E. H.

*Epiphany-Tide*, 1913.

**" The Children of the Second Birth  
Whom the world could not tame."**



# PREFACE

## TO ANY MAN

IT has been so often explained that if "all Saints" should prove eventually not to be conterminous with "all people," the disparity will not come about because it is in accordance with GOD'S wish, but in consequence of some men's choice, that it hardly seems worth while to insist on it again. Yet, of so little use, speaking comparatively, is either teaching or explanation, that many persons still believe that sanctity is not only not the right description of the state of each one of us, which is only too disastrously true, but that there is no possibility, and never was any, of its being so. It seems, somehow or other, misbestowed labour to remind such of S. Paul's words to the Church of Corinth, when he addressed the members of it as those who are "called to be saints." Corinth was not a city where it was easy to be one, if it has ever been easy anywhere. So far as outward environment goes, Corinth seemed a peculiarly unpropitious spot for the growth of sanctity; yet S. Paul used the startling phrase, and to the Corinthians—"called to be saints." So, when people hear it,

they shrug their shoulders, and argue that things were different then, or S. Paul was indulging in hyperbole.

But there is a far more cogent proof of the potential sanctity inherent in every human creature than even S. Paul's haunting apostrophe—"called to be saints." Eight times over, at least, is it recorded in the Gospels that our Blessed Lord used the all-embracing words: "If any man." Now this phrase admits of no exception. Obviously, beyond the possibility of argument, it applies to each and every one of us. There are really only five different sayings, because one is repeated by three Evangelists, S. Luke intensifying its force by recollecting the word "daily." These sayings cover the whole course of our life, the moral, the intellectual, the spiritual, and one contains the promise of everlasting reward. Here they are:

"If any man wills to come after ME, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow ME."<sup>1</sup>

There is the appalling ideal of the will, exercised deliberately, which our LORD sets not before a chosen selected few, but before every one and each one of the common average multitude as well: "If *any* man," it is Christ's call to every human being to choose the good life.

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke ix. 23. Cf. S. Matt. x. 38, 39, and xvi. 24-26; S. Mark viii. 34-37.

Then follows the promise of enlightenment, an intellectual gift ; though in the Christian economy, knowledge is to rest on the double basis of understanding and will—"If any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine."<sup>1</sup> There is, there surely always has been, a great diversity in the gifts with which men are naturally endowed : a fact which S. Paul admits, when, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, he enumerates the various talents we have received "for the edifying of the Body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the Faith and of the knowledge of the Son of GOD unto a perfect man."<sup>2</sup> But whether we be clever or stupid, or (perhaps dullest of all) mediocre, there is only one way to the knowledge best worth having, the way of a little child's obedience, as he does the will of those wiser and greater than he. The third and fourth sayings contain the supreme offer of vital sustenance :

"I am the living Bread which came down from Heaven : if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever."<sup>3</sup>

"If any man thirst, let him come unto ME, and drink."<sup>4</sup>

With these should be put that other promise, which, besides all else, must surely include Eucharistic union : "If any man love Me, he will keep My

<sup>1</sup> S. John vii. 17. Cf. S. John viii. 51.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 12, 13.

<sup>3</sup> S. John vi. 51.

<sup>4</sup> S. John vii. 37.

words : and My Father will love him, and WE will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.”<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, there is the promise of eternal bliss :

“ If any man serve ME, let him follow ME ; and where I am, there shall also My servant be : if any man serve ME, him will My Father honour.”<sup>2</sup>

No one, in the face of the Evangelists’ records, can maintain that the possibility of being a saint has been put beyond the reach of a single creature. They may forget or explain away S. Paul’s words ; but the appealing Cry of the SON of GOD rings through the earth and calls across the seas. There is no limitation nor qualification ; no way of escape save the dark path of deaf or callous disobedience. He speaks to all : “ If any man——”

<sup>1</sup> S. John xiv. 23.

<sup>2</sup> S. John xii. 26.

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I

DEFINITENESS AND STRENGTH

A





# IN THE WAY OF THE SAINTS

## I

### DEFINITENESS AND STRENGTH

“Quit you like men: be strong.”

It may seem the very height of perversity, the most gratuitous offering of offence, to call a book by such a name as this bears, and to begin it with a chapter whose title suggests rather the building up of a philosophical system than of a holy character. It can only appear so to those who have mistaken the real essence of sanctity. That many people have done, still do, so is suggested by Francis Thompson's pleasant witticism, when he observes in his *S. Ignatius Loyola*, “It is the crudest of all fallacies to suppose that Saints are fashioned customarily from tea and carpet-slippers.”

Whatever else sanctity may or may not be, it is neither vague nor weak nor formless. There is, though sometimes there seems to exist an inclina-

tion to deny it, an intellectual element in sanctity, even though the controlling factors be moral. There is no holiness in muddleheadedness *quâ* muddleheadedness: the Kingdom of GOD cannot be advanced by stupidity as such. Nor is this statement even distantly connected with Herbart's crude and cruel dictum, that "the stupid cannot be virtuous." On the contrary, they often are; but it is in spite of, not in consequence of, their grave defect; and, as we watch them blundering along their foolish way, we mourn over the obstacles which stupidity raises for their virtue, even while we rejoice that such is the intrinsic power of goodness that it can and does daily triumph even over the dullest, most obfuscated unintelligence.

When people are not actually deifying dullness, still they often tend to argue as if brilliancy were the ordained foe of piety, as if there were something intrinsically worldly in "brains": they expatiate on the "simple shepherds" of the Nativity, and conveniently forget that the learned and even wealthy Magi not only were called, but really came and worshipped. Some who are most anxious to proclaim that "with GOD there are no class distinctions," seem straightway to forget it in their desire to exalt the poor and foolish at the expense of the intellectual and well off. If a man of proved ability be known to care most for holiness, people often seem to think it as topsy-turvy a

state of affairs as if a Senior Wrangler were also a cricket Blue. Not that Senior Wranglers exist, except as a memory, nor that they are commonly cricket, or any other, Blues ; but memories and even sheer hypothesis may serve as an illustration. What we ought to realise, not merely to parrot, is that with GOD there are *no* class distinctions—that is, none on the lower and none on the higher levels ; that a carpenter and a sage, a seamstress and an athlete, are one and the same as material for sanctity in His all-loving sight.

Again, looking at the matter from an entirely different side, starting out, so we feel inclined to say, with a wholly false definition of love, there are a goodly company nowadays who would fain blur all lines of demarcation, blunt the edge of every proposition, take the core from every problem, and all this in the name of charity. It is so unkind, we are told, to differ from our neighbours—so unkind, not to say arrogant and self-sufficient : and, if we really will persist in saying in this uncompromising fashion that something is definitely wrong, we shall almost certainly hurt some one's feelings. Moreover, such unpleasant adjectives are selected to describe us if we venture to make a stand for a principle, that it is not surprising if the sensitive falter and the weak yield altogether.

One cannot help wondering sometimes what would have become of the Primitive Church had

the Apostles and Fathers taken this tender meticulous care to announce no message, to proclaim no principle, which could run counter to commonly-received opinions, or possibly clash with important persons' prejudices. It is fairly safe to surmise that we, living in this twentieth century, would not have inherited from them "The Faith once for all delivered to the Saints."

It is a pity that the words of S. Cyril of Jerusalem are not more generally studied than they are:<sup>1</sup> "Beware lest thou have the title 'faithful' and the will of the faithless. Thou hast entered into a contest : toil on through the race—another such opportunity thou canst not have."<sup>2</sup> "There is a serpent by the wayside watching those who pass by ; beware lest he bite thee with unbelief. . . . Let us nerve our minds and brace up our souls, and prepare our hearts. The race is for our soul."<sup>3</sup> "Thou likewise, though not daring before thy baptism to wrestle with the adversaries, yet after thou hast received the grace, and art henceforth confident *in the armour of righteousness*, must then do battle, and preach the Gospel if thou wilt."<sup>4</sup> "Take heed then, brethren, and *hold fast the traditions* which ye now receive, and *write*

<sup>1</sup> An edition, in Greek and English, of S. Cyril's *Five Catechetical Lectures*, is published at the price of 1s. 6d. by Messrs. James Parker of Oxford.

<sup>2</sup> *Procatechesis*, § 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, § 16.

<sup>4</sup> Lecture III., § 13.

*them on the table of your heart.* Guard them with reverence, lest perchance the enemy despoil any who have grown slack; or lest some heretic pervert any of the truths delivered to you.”<sup>1</sup> “GOD forbid that any of Christ’s servants, here or elsewhere, should run over to the enemy.”<sup>2</sup> “In the Holy Catholic Church, receiving instruction and behaving ourselves virtuously, we shall attain the Kingdom of Heaven, and inherit ETERNAL LIFE; for which also we endure all toils, that we may be made partakers thereof from the Lord. For ours is no trifling aim, but our endeavour is for eternal life.”<sup>3</sup> These sayings, and others like them are sown, like fruitful seed scattered on the fields, all through S. Cyril’s discourses wherein he taught the catechumens of Jerusalem in the fourth century. No one can fail to perceive the definiteness of the faith; no one can deny the militant strength for which S. Cyril asked. Who, in these days, among the many comfortable apostles of philanthropic give-and-take, would care for the supreme promise he held out to those eager catechumens: “All thy life long will thy Guardian, the Comforter, abide with thee. He will care for thee as for His own soldier, for thy goings out, and thy comings in, and thy plotting foes”? Who dreams of soldiering, or really believes in plotting foes?

<sup>1</sup> Lecture v., §§ 12, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Lecture xv., § 8.

<sup>3</sup> Lecture xviii., § 28.



Is it too much to say that, ever since the Reformation, Englishmen who called themselves Protestants have been increasingly selling their birthright of decisiveness for a mess of dubiety? Catholicism, wherever and whenever it is found, east or west, in Moscow, or Rome, or Canterbury, made and makes for definiteness and strength. In the old days in England, when all were Catholics, men were plainly and unashamedly whatever they were: if they loved GOD then, in unmistakable terms, they said so, as Richard Rolle did, "Love is a burning yearning after GOD, with a wonderful delight and certainty. GOD is light and burning. Light clarifies our reason; burning kindles our will, that we desire naught but Him. Love is a life, joining together the loving and the loved." Or like Mother Julian, "GOD, of thy goodnes give me thyself, for thou are enough to me: and I may aske nothing that is lesse, that may be fullie worship to thee; and if I aske anything that is lesse, ever me wanteth. But onlie in thee I have all." If, on the other hand, they chose evil, they did that avowedly, not covering it up with some seemly cloke of hypocrisy. Surely, whether historically true or not, that much is indicated by the famous lines which Shakspeare put into Richard's mouth:

"I that am rudely stamp'd and want love's majesty  
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;  
I that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,

Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,  
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time  
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,  
And that so lamely and unfashionable  
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them :  
Why I, in this weak piping time of peace,  
Have no delight to pass away the time,  
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun,  
And descant on mine own deformity :  
And therefore since I cannot prove a lover,  
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,  
I am determined to prove a villain,  
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.  
Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,  
By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams,  
To set my brother Clarence and the king  
In deadly hate the one against the other :  
And if King Edward be as just and true  
As I am subtle, false, and treacherous,  
This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up."

Historical or no, Shakspeare would scarcely have presented such a picture of deliberately chosen vice to an age which was weak, half-hearted, and gelatinous. Nor would Webster surely have drawn his terrific pictures of open-eyed, intentional sin. *Pecca fortiter* ; it was no counsel of perfection ! It is a modern invention, this half-heartedness masquerading as "the greatest of these three." Of all forms of betrayal, the compromise of principles, the willingness to let, in the great name of charity, evil deeds pass without challenge, is to-day

at once the most common and the most deplorable ; “ Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss ? ” Of all forms of self-delusion, that of saving one’s own skin on a plea of love is surely the most deadly ! The source of it all is not tolerance but indifference.

But to return to the question of intelligence, which is a subtler problem than these travesties of charity. Erasmus was not, perhaps, in most men’s eyes a saint ; at any rate he was never canonised, if he was offered a Cardinal’s hat. But he was the familiar friend of Blessed Thomas More, and himself cared for piety, for real goodness, probably as much as, if not more than, any of those who have ever blamed him. He in that book which could once be found, so we are told, in every inn in Spain, observed, “ It is not the noise of thy lips but the fervent desire of thy mind which (as it were a very shrill voice) beateth the ears of GOD.”<sup>1</sup> Erasmus did not imagine that “ clever people ” are in the majority ; in his epistle prefixed to this same little treatise he wrote, with that characteristic directness which often gave touchy people offence, “ There be a great number of fools and simple souls in every place.” “ Dullness is not sanctity,” he had once exclaimed with a touch of youthful impatience, of which, like some of the rest of us, he never quite succeeded in stripping himself. “ A dull book for a

<sup>1</sup> *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, ch. ii.



dull fellow" was his description, not long before he died, of a small volume which he had once composed for a none too promising pupil. But though he cherished no delusions about the intellectual equipment of average people, he would have even such remember, that in their prayers, though the heart's love was, as S. Paul had taught, the main thing, yet they should also use such understanding as they might possess; "the fervent desire of thy mind beateth the ears of GOD"—love and understanding working together to achieve the result. This truth, that mind is a precious gift to be used, forgotten and even denied as it often is, has been taught by the good in all generations. In the Bible, there are two great passages, one the pattern for, one the description of, the Christian Soldier. The first may be found in the fifth chapter of the Book of Wisdom, the second in the sixth chapter of S. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. It is a risky thing nowadays to talk about dates, but probably, though the two books may be nearly co-temporary, most scholars would assign priority to the former. Anyhow, it is, unfortunately, less widely known than S. Paul's description; and, since it is the divine pattern of the soldier, it may be quoted here advantageously:

"He shall take unto Him for whole armour His zeal; and make the creature His weapon for vengeance upon His enemies.

"He shall put on righteousness as a breastplate ; and instead of a helmet guileless judgment.

"He shall take holiness for an invincible shield ; and His severe wrath shall He sharpen for a sword : and the world shall fight with Him against the unwise."

Surely, the helmet of a guileless judgment is a most inspiring defence ; far more suggestive than S. Paul's phrase, "the helmet of salvation" ; and again, it surely would prove the most effectual safeguard conceivable, just because it combines those two sides of a man's nature which are all-important, the understanding and the heart ; the judgment resulting from the first, the guilelessness from the second. It is well worth while to remember, too, that the first defence S. Paul mentions is "the girdle of truth," wherein also there is and must be the intellectual and the moral elements. Dr. Gore elucidates this : "The belt which keeps all else in its place is for the Christian, truth—that is, singleness of eye or perfect sincerity—the pure and simple desire of the light."<sup>1</sup> *The pure and simple desire of the light.* Desire must be of the heart ; light illumines the understanding. There are among GOD'S creatures many levels of understanding ; but surely we are not to suppose that light ever shines in its fullness on any but those

<sup>1</sup> *S. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians: a Practical Exposition*, by the Rt. Rev. Charles Gore, M.A., D.D. Fifth Impression, p. 243.

who are making the utmost, the outside possible use, of whatever measure of intellectual ability GOD has given them.

“Be sure that GOD

Ne’er dooms to waste the strength He deigns impart.”

And yet, on all hands, we encounter the most dreadful waste. As we see talents unused, abilities undeveloped, what an indictment it is of us men, for it is our doing. GOD designed our powers for use, and we squander them anyhow: we fritter them away in trivialities of which children might well be ashamed. “I am not at all clever: I am quite a stupid person.” This is the remark we often hear. Even where it is sincere, it is fallacious. It is not necessary to be clever to do our best: very many clever people do very much less than their best; unexpected success not seldom attends honest effort. “Though we poor women are not fit persons to give good advice, still sometimes we hit the mark as well as a man,” so wrote S. Teresa—with that twinkling humour which gleams so often through her writings—to the Very Rev. Father the General of the Order of our Lady of Mount Carmel. Self-development in its essence is no selfish thing. “In illumining others the torch consumes itself. Such is the image of a Christian,” said the Spanish mystic, Luis de Granada.

Real strength in intellectual things is perhaps less common than we sometimes think. In *The*

*Sayings of the Fathers*, a collection of holy counsels often attributed to Palladius, who wrote *The Paradise of the Fathers*, and, however that may be, in large measure of Egyptian monastic origin, the following suggestive story is to be found: "On one occasion, certain philosophers came to the desert to try the monks. . . . Now there passed by a certain great monk who was a Libyan, and they said unto him, 'O thou great monk, who hast grown grey-headed in iniquity, come hither;' and he went to them readily, and they smote him on one cheek, whereupon he turned the other to them. And when they saw this, they rose up straightway and worshipped him, and they said, 'Verily this is a monk.' Then they set him in their midst and asked him saying, 'What things do ye who are living in the desert do more than we? Ye fast, and we also fast; ye lead pure lives, and we also lead pure lives; whatsoever ye do, we also do; what do ye who live in the desert do more than we?' The Libyan said unto them, 'We keep watch over our minds,' and the philosophers said unto him, 'We are unable to keep watch over our minds.'"<sup>1</sup>

It has been indeed a most disastrous mistake to belittle, in the supposed interests of Christian character, either strength of understanding or

<sup>1</sup> *The Paradise of the Fathers*, &c., edited by Dr. Wallis Budge, vol. ii. p. 41.

strength of purpose. Humility and weakness are not synonymous. Let anyone who fancies that they are read Scupoli's chapter xxxii. on Humility, in *The Spiritual Combat*. Certainly Scupoli did not connect holiness and futility. "To acquire the Virtues," he tells us, "besides what we have said above, there is need of a mind which is generous and open, and of a will which is not faint or feeble, but resolute and strong, with a firm conviction of being obliged to pass through many things which are adverse and hard." <sup>1</sup>

If ever a Saint were conspicuous for common sense, surely it was S. Teresa. She was writing on the subject of spiritual directors, and she said: "It is of great consequence that the director should be prudent—I mean of sound understanding—and a man of experience. If, in addition to this, he is a learned man, it is a very great matter. But if these three qualities cannot be had together, the first two are the most important, because learned men can be found with whom we can communicate when it is necessary. I mean that for beginners, learned men are of little use, if they are not men of prayer. I do not say that they are to have nothing to do with learned men, because a spirituality, the foundations of which are not resting on the truth, I would rather were not accompanied with prayer. Learning is a

<sup>1</sup> *The Spiritual Combat*, ch. xxxv.



great thing, for it teaches us who know so little, and enlightens us ; so when we have come to a knowledge of the truths contained in the holy writings, we do what we ought to do. From silly devotions, GOD deliver us !”<sup>1</sup>

S. Bernard of Clairvaux in one of his Sermons (on the *Canticles*) said : “ I may seem perhaps to say too much in disparagement of learning, as if I wished to blame the learned, and prohibit the study of literature. By no means. I do not overlook how greatly her learned sons have profited and do profit the Church, whether in combating her enemies or in instructing the simple.” Those who imagine that there is no harm likely to accrue to holy things if men allow themselves to be vague and slovenly in thought and expression may perhaps be struck by some still more definite words, which S. Bernard, writing about 1127 to Brother Oger, first Dean of the Regular Canons of S. Nicholas des Près, near Tournay, uttered : “ While, being absent from you, I meditate, dictate, or write down what you are in time to read, where, I pray you, is the silence and quiet of my retreat ? But all these things, you say, you can do in silence ; yet, if you think, you will not answer thus. For what a tumult there is in the mind of those who dictate ; what a crowd of sentiments, variety of expressions, diversity of senses jostle ;

<sup>1</sup> *Life of S. Teresa*, written by Herself, xiii. 24.

how frequently one rejects that word which presents itself and seeks another, which still escapes! What close attention one gives to the consecutiveness of the line of thought, and the eloquence of the expression! How can it be made most plain to the intellect, how can it be made most useful to the conscience; what, in short, shall be put before and what after for a particular reader, and many other things, do those who are careful in their style, attend to most closely."

But to turn back to S. Teresa, let anyone who suspects "tea and carpet-slippers" to be the source of Saints, read those other gallant words of that great woman: "It is certain that the love of GOD does not consist in tears, nor in this sweetness and tenderness which we for the most part desire, and with which we console ourselves, but rather in serving Him in justice, fortitude, and humility."<sup>1</sup>

How definite and apt her counsels are! There is no vague, wavering aspiration, no slovenly fumbling after and missing of the point in her well-knit advice: "A beginner must look upon himself as making a garden, wherein our LORD may take His delight, but in a soil unfruitful and abounding in weeds. . . . We have then, as good gardeners, by the help of GOD, to see that the plants grow, to water them carefully that they may

<sup>1</sup> *Life of S. Teresa*, written by Herself, xi. 20.

not die, but produce blossoms, which shall send forth much fragrance, refreshing to our LORD. . . . Let us now see how this garden is to be watered, that we may understand what we have to do ; how much trouble it will cost us, whether the pain be greater than the trouble, or how long a time it will take us.”<sup>1</sup> And then follow definite instructions about prayer.

Elsewhere, speaking of the virtue of courage, she writes : “ His Majesty will give the pearls to him who shall bring them forth and employ them usefully for himself and others. . . . It is through these gifts that our LORD gives us that strength which we through our sins have lost.”<sup>2</sup>

If anyone really doubt whether strength befits the Christian, or weakness shames him, let him consider the grave words of S. John of the Cross. He is explaining the line, “ My house being now at rest,” *i.e.* as he says the passions being mortified, concupiscence quenched, desires subdued and lulled to sleep in the blessed night of the purgation of sense. In the course of his explanation he dwells on the necessity for trials and temptations, on their inevitableness. “ If the soul be not tempted, tried, and proved in temptations and afflictions some will never attain to wisdom.” Then follows a passage which may well give pause to all who confound humility with foolish diffidence, and

<sup>1</sup> *Life of S. Teresa*, xi. 10, 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, x. 8.



submissive obedience with invertebrate weakness : "Those who are strong and more able to bear suffering are purified in more intense trials and in less time. But those who are weak are purified very slowly, with weak temptations, and the night of their purgation is long : their senses are refreshed from time to time lest they should fall away : these, however, come late to the pureness of their perfection in this life, and some of them never."<sup>1</sup> Of course, these terrifying words do not refer to bodily but to spiritual strength : it is a commonplace of observation that the physically strong are by no means necessarily intellectually, still less spiritually, strong : and that the frailest and feeblest physically are often indomitably spiritual. But what a dreadful warning is this of S. John of the Cross, that the "weak . . . come late to the pureness of their perfection in this life, and some of them never."

Courage must ever be a dominant factor in spiritual strength. Speaking of the battle of life, S. François de Sales said, "Nous ne sommes jamais vaincus, sinon lorsque nous avons perdu ou la vie, ou le courage."<sup>2</sup>

"When I see persons . . . resolved, detached, courageous, I love them much," wrote S. Teresa, "and I should like to have my conversation with

<sup>1</sup> *The Dark Night of the Soul*, I. xiv. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Introduction à la Vie dévote*, I. v.

such persons, and I think they help me on. People who are afraid . . . seem to vex me, and drive me to pray to GOD and the Saints to make them to undertake such things as these which now frighten us." <sup>1</sup> What a combination of holy common-sense and humane humour !

It is of course obvious that strength and definiteness can show themselves in three several ways—in thought, in word, and in deed. We began with strength of thought, but quotations from the Saints have led, insensibly, to strength in word, and to the still more concrete form, strength in deed. It is in these, then, since our thoughts are in the main the private possession of each of us, that people imagine love suffers. Yet there is no enmity between love and strength ; indeed emotion without virility does not deserve the great name of love at all. The Virtues depend more upon one another than sometimes we care to remember. What, according to the ancient Writing, is the office of Wisdom if it be not to bind the Virtues together ? "She teacheth temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in their life." <sup>2</sup>

Indeed, the ways of the Saints lend no colour whatsoever to the practices of modern times,

<sup>1</sup> *Relations of her Spiritual State*, by S. Teresa, i. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Wisdom* viii. 7.

those practices which aim at dissolving boundary lines, obliterating distinctions, abolishing vehement desire, and drowning everything and everybody in a vague sea of formless, meaningless sentimentality. For, whatever some may say to the contrary, the Saints were not devoid of that quality which is so closely allied to definiteness and strength as to seem almost a part of them, viz. practicalness. It is an occasional complaint, brought perhaps by half-informed persons, that the Saints were and are unpractical people. Yet if we look at their counsels on spiritual matters, or at their remarks about material events, or at their actions in this workaday world, we find a curious capacity to hit the nail squarely on the head. What a world of practical experience, of actual acquaintance with human desires, do those words, which Thomas à Kempis put into our LORD'S mouth, show: "Fili, magis placent mihi patientia et humilitas in adversis, quam multa consolatio et devotio in prosperis."<sup>1</sup>

There is an interesting combination of spiritual and material practicalness in the following passage from a letter written by S. Teresa to her brother, Lorenzo de Cepeda; she is writing about a chalice which was to be his gift: "The weight is about

<sup>1</sup> Son, far more pleasing to ME are patience and humility in adversity than much consolation and devotion in prosperity.—*Imitatio*, III. lvii.

twelve ducats and a real, and I think the value of the workmanship amounts to forty reals, making in all sixteen ducats and three reals less. It is all silver, and I think you will be pleased with it. They showed me one of the metal you spoke of: but though it has not been long made, and is even gilt, a person can easily see what it is in reality. It is quite black inside the foot, and this makes it look disagreeable. I immediately resolved not to purchase it; and it really did appear to me unbearable that you who use so much silver at your table should wish to buy *brass* for the service of GOD. I think I shall not find another so cheap nor of so good a size."

In fact a student of S. Teresa's *Letters* might make almost endless quotations to prove her most uncommon practicalness: all of it mingled and interwoven with a profound devotion, an unforgettable humility, a piercingness of mystical insight, which all together make her the great and wonderful Saint she is. If we think of a Saint in relation to his fellows, we may find this same excellent quality. For instance, Dom Lorenzo Scupoli, weighing means for helping his fellow-men—those, for example, who might seek his direction—writes thus discriminatingly: "Having seen how the understanding is to be lifted up from things sensible to the Divinity and the Mysteries of the Incarnate Word, I will here

add other methods, to draw from them different meditations, to the end that, as souls differ among themselves in taste, so they may have many different kinds of food." <sup>1</sup> He did not fall into the common error of supposing that men are all made on one model, and that something very like a wooden peg.

If we move on to the highest plane of exalted devotion, we shall find so great a Saint as S. Bernard retaining his sound practical sense still, in those lofty regions: "I know not if in this life man is truly able to rise to the fourth degree, which is, no longer to love himself except for the sake of GOD. Those who have made trial of this (if there be any) may assert it to be attainable: to me I confess it appears impossible. It will be so without doubt when the good and faithful servant shall have been brought into the joy of his LORD, and inebriated with the fulness of the house of GOD. For being, as it were, exhilarate, he shall in a wonderful way be forgetful of himself, he shall lose the consciousness of what he is, and being absorbed altogether in GOD shall attach himself unto Him with all his powers, shall thenceforth be one in spirit with him." <sup>2</sup>

The practicalness of their outlook was often expressed by the Saints in pungent home-truths: they

<sup>1</sup> *The Spiritual Combat*, ch. xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> To Guigues, the Prior, and the other monks of the Grand Chartreuse, *circa* 1125.



really seem as if they were incapable of being scared by that modern bogey, we have fashioned so carefully, the Danger of giving Offence. Many people now appear to think that it is an act of aggression if a man or woman wholeheartedly means something and says so. The Saints delivered themselves with no beating about the bush whatever. For example, S. Catharine of Siena, writing on the most solemn and profound subject, the Holy Eucharist, said : " I will not, therefore, have you act like those who neglect to fulfil the precepts of the Church, because, as they say, they are not worthy. And so they pass years in sin and never receive the food of their souls. Oh, what foolish sort of humility is this ! Who does not see that you are not worthy ? And when you do expect to become so ? You will not be more fit at the end than at the beginning." <sup>1</sup>

Then, to give an example of equal plain spokenness, on a far less serious matter, one indeed of more or less common life, it is recorded that S. Ignatius Loyola once said that two or three pious women had given him more trouble and anxiety about their affairs than the whole Society of JESUS had cost him. Truly, the Saints were not mealy-mouthed opportunists. The whole Church of CHRIST would gain incalculably, if we could all grasp, once for all, that weakness, vagueness, slovenliness, unpracticalness, far from being

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of S. Catharine of Siena*, No. 229.

signs of sanctity, are a most signal proof of the failure and unfaithfulness of us, GOD's earth-stained creatures. Love and feeble compromise are mutually contradictory. Why modern opinion should so often identify charity with gelatinousness, and virtue with the compromise of first principles, is one of the puzzles for which no solution seems possible. The silent majesty of our Blessed LORD under persecution and insolence and indescribable outrage; the fiery intrepidity of S. Peter; the imperturbable hopefulness of S. Paul; S. John's outspoken condemnation of heresy, when he found himself under the same roof as Cerinthus, that "enemy of the truth";<sup>1</sup> the unflinching deaths of the martyrs; these were all exhibitions of strength, different in form, but alike in showing definite invincible strength. The manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit is conveyed to our understandings under the images of Fire and Wind, the most resistless and untameable of natural forces.

S. Catharine of Siena, a woman, not a man, heard these words ringing in her ears from GOD the Father, as she believed, and as the Church has believed: "For this reason (if the soul elect to love ME) she should elect to endure pains for ME in whatever mode or circumstance I may send them to her. Patience cannot be

<sup>1</sup> Irenæus, *Against Heresies*, iii. 3, 4.

proved in any other way than by suffering, and patience is united with love, as has been said. Therefore bear yourselves with manly courage, for, unless you do so, you will not prove yourselves to be spouses of My Truth, and faithful children, nor of the company of those who relish the taste of My honour, and the salvation of souls.”<sup>1</sup>

On the foundations of a courage which proclaimed its principles and faith without hesitation or shadow of turning was the Church built, and with these same weapons her triumphs were slowly and surely won, as she raised upon the ruins of the Roman Empire, which had thought to crush her, the stately edifice of the Mediæval Church. When divisions came, and internecine strife shook her with its destructive and dissolving power, still with passionate strength she addressed herself to the fight. A deadlier foe than Imperial Cæsar is threatening her. Manly strength is being undermined and sapped by an overblown luxury: men seem inclined to sell love incomprehensible, love unfeigned, for material ease; to barter an imperishable heritage for a transient mess of comforting pottage. Yet weakness has never won anything worth winning, and never will. Bluster is not strength, neither are bustle

<sup>1</sup> *The Dialogue of the Seraphic Virgin S. Catharine of Siena* (translated by Algar Thorold), p. 39. Published by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.



and noise success: but a steadfast readiness to face ridicule and obloquy for the Truth's sake has been the secret of the Church Militant; and it is still her life-warrant in the dim and threatening future. It is an extremely unfortunate thing that Religion, like every other great cause, has unworthy followers and disciples, *poseurs*, self-indulgent, lack-lustred, invertebrate, morose, sour, weak. But it is not by these that we are judged, or, at any rate, not by these alone. There are the Saints, the experts in Religion: and the two signal characteristics of the great Saints are a high degree of virile, practical efficiency, and a gaiety which nothing can stifle.

But in spite of the example of the Saints, the present age has an irremediable taste for a certain vague sentimentality. There are not a few people who appear to think that vehemence of word and deed are always and intrinsically incompatible with holiness. But surely in a world so prone as this to evil, the powers of Goodness must sometimes be exerted in a terrible fashion! We turn to the ancient prophets of Israel, and such ringing declarations as this amaze us:

"Is not My word as a fire? saith the LORD, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"<sup>1</sup> There is no wrapping up of unpleasant truth there; there is the hammer's force which breaks,

<sup>1</sup> Jer. xxiii. 29.

the energy of fire which consumes. Or again, "I have hewed them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of My mouth."<sup>1</sup>

If anyone will try to slip out of all this by murmuring something about a dispensation which has passed away, he may be reminded of our LORD's clarion call : "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."<sup>2</sup> He may remember, too, for his salutary correction, that it was the Apostle of Love who wrote in the dread Apocalypse of "the fierceness and wrath of Almighty GOD,"<sup>3</sup> who wrote that still more startling phrase "Hide us . . . from the wrath of the LAMB."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hosea vi. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. xix. 15.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matt. xi. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. vi. 16.

## II

### ENDURING HARDNESS



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“Tota vita Christi crux fuit et martyrium ; et tu tibi quæris requiem get audium ?”—*Imit. Christi*, ii. 12.

THE above title seems to raise two distinct questions :

(1) What is hardness ?

(2) Why should it be endured ?

It is not quite easy to know which to take first. One can hardly say why a thing should be endured before one knows what the thing is. And yet, in taking the notion of hardness first, there are dangers of seeming to forestall matters which should fall properly under the second head. The conception of hardness as a thing to be endured, can be split up under five heads at least :

(a) Physical.

(b) Intellectual.

(c) Moral.

(d) Emotional.

(e) Spiritual.

But we have to remember that in the human sciences—*i.e.* in those regions of thought which

deal with Man—clear-cut methods of division and classification are often misleading, and seldom more so than when they tempt us to fancy that lines of demarcation between classes are absolute. Whereas, in human affairs, experience shows that one large element of complexity and difficulty is generally to be found in the fact that dividing lines are neither rigid nor clear, and that classes are apt not to be strictly self-contained. For example, in this case, physical and intellectual hardness may coexist, and even perhaps be practised, without moral, and certainly without spiritual, hardness coming into play; but the last two are scarcely feasible without the first, and generally some measure of the second.

Physical hardness! Have some of us forgotten, or perhaps never learned, what it means, in this age of vast opulence, of labour-saving devices, of refinement and elaboration of luxury, of unexampled self-indulgence and ease? How widespread is the desire for pleasure, not seldom for pleasure at any cost almost; how instant and insistent, coincident indeed with the onset of even slight pain, is the call for soporifics, for opiates! Do we stay to reflect how quickly action breeds habit? how impalpably but rapidly desire becomes ingrained? No sober person is so foolish as to undervalue or regret the great discoveries of science which have led to the mitigation of some

acute forms of human suffering. But can we really believe that a race unwilling to inure itself to bear occasional pain up, at any rate, to a moderate point, unable to rise to that degree of effort and stress and endeavour which is essential to real achievement of any sort, could be doing otherwise than committing, slowly if you like but surely, moral and spiritual suicide?

I am not unmindful that in the physical region hardness is a comparative thing. What seems hardness to one set of people looks very like luxury to another: effort which may be bracing to a strong and healthy person may come very near to torture to the sick, the delicate, the overpressed.

Of course, we all know that there is in the lives of the less well-off classes a very serious amount of hardness. But we cannot be altogether satisfied when we realise that much of it comes from the carelessness at best, from the wilful selfishness at worst, of others, and is bitterly resented. There is nothing prophylactic in gratuitous suffering endured unwillingly, wrathfully. No doubt sometimes the most unmerited pain is accepted in a fine spirit, and works benefit then to the sufferer: but that advantage does not exempt from blame those who ought never to have caused it. There is hardness which ought to be borne, and hardness which ought not to be inflicted: in the latter class



we may include every kind which is forced on the weak and helpless by the strong and prosperous who enjoy security. When these allowances have been made, it remains true that for each one of us there are degrees of suffering: and this is so even if pain and pleasure are more evenly distributed than our hasty mal-observation sometimes imagines. But, to introduce some definiteness into our ideas, we may say that hardness appears at the point when we are *conscious* of the effort. Then the question arises, which we must answer later, Are we, in our several degrees of capacity to feel and suffer pain, to yield or to persist when we reach that effort-point?

We turn next to intellectual hardness. I doubt if self-indulgence *in intellectual things* is so common as some other forms of ease-taking: but I am not so sure that those who are highly endowed with brains, to whom intellectual "slacking" is, just because they are brilliant, no temptation; who, just because the desire for knowledge, for discovery, for achievement is so strong, find work easy, may not, nevertheless, be in imminent danger of indulging themselves otherwise: they may, for instance, be only too likely to excuse themselves from tiresome calls upon them and from peddling duties, on the score that their work will suffer if they do respond to every tedious appeal. The element of truth in such a plea introduces a very



real kind of hardness, first in judging rightly, and secondly in doing or forbearing when judgment has drawn the line.

Another form, an obvious and common one, of enduring intellectual hardness, may be found in the handling of honest doubt. We all know that we live in an age when pose and sham and affectation are appallingly widespread: and that in such an atmosphere there are silly, vacuous people who imagine that to doubt the truths of religion is a sign of superior intelligence. But that is not what I mean. Besides those, there are people who doubt honestly; who, as Fr. Tyrrell said, "are . . . incredulous because it seems too good to be true;"<sup>1</sup> or to quote him again, a man "through some accidental confusion of mind may be speculatively an unbeliever, and yet wish in his heart that Christianity were true; and by his whole life confess his affection for it;"<sup>2</sup> or there may be one who has been robbed of his faith, who miserably confesses in the words of S. Mary Magdalene's unforgettable lament, though with a significance still more poignant even than hers, "They have taken away my LORD, and I know not where they have laid HIM." Well, in the resolute handling of and wrestling with honest doubt, there is ample scope and opportunity for enduring hardness, as anyone who has tried, knows.

<sup>1</sup> *Oil and Wine*, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

There are some people who do not go the length of doubting, because, from one cause or another, they do not really ever think, squarely, fairly, honestly out to the conclusion. Fr. Tyrrell once described such: "All that is known as bias and prejudice, all distortion of the judgment through 'inordinate affections,' through a desire not to see unpleasant, disturbing, mortifying truths that would entail troublesome and painful alterations in our thought and conduct, all such blinking of disagreeable facts and stifling of unwelcome suggestions are indications of mental untruthfulness."

It is not a nice phrase, "mental untruthfulness": but its opposite, mental sincerity, is not the commonest of virtues, nor the easiest to compass. To root out resolutely, to refuse to be bound by any or all of these intellectual states which Fr. Tyrrell described, means, to some people, the endurance of not a little intellectual hardness. It comes so fatally easy to them to slide, to shut their eyes, to close their ears, to let sleeping dogs lie, as we say. To take the other course, to face difficulties in their entirety, asks, from some of us, something very close to heroism.

Subtler still, perhaps, are difficulties which, while they seem to be emotional, matters of feeling, really rest for solution on intellect, on right judgment; judgment being only the result of the use of intellect. May I illustrate this species of difficulty by

drawing your attention to two currents of desire, common enough, I think, among us, though quite contrary in effect the one to the other. The first is that foolish sort of presumption which Richard Rolle included among "sins of deed." "The sins of deed are these:" he wrote, and then follows a list of about fifty, among which he reckons "to begin a thing that is above our might."

The other, commoner perhaps, is the very opposite of presumption—the tendency to shirk responsibility, to try to slide out of every difficulty which might call for heroic effort. Not long ago, a woman said to me quite pathetically, "I could not bear to be Pope." Well, as I pointed out to her, she was in no imminent danger. But what, I think, was really in her mind was not that, which of course she knew as well as I did, was out of the question; but that of which the Papacy was, as it were, typical: what she was obsessed with was the staggering dreadfulness of any marked responsibility. It seems to me—I may be wrong, but it seems to me that this is a growing feeling among us. While in all classes and both sexes, rights are claimed eagerly, responsibility seems to be shunned. I am sure it is a temper of mind inimical to all fine achievement. To put up with, to try to be worthy of, any responsibility which comes to one naturally, is surely a real and very practical way of enduring hardness.

Further, when the choice of accepting or refusing responsibility seems to be left to us, then to judge rightly between attempting too much or too little is a still more drastic form of the same thing.

I expressed some doubt further back as to whether intellectual self-indulgence is so common as some other forms. There is one species of it, blended, like the last, with feeling, which is very common nowadays. It springs from a good motive, a regard for those about us; it calls itself charity, but issues, if it be not very careful, in thought so loose as not to deserve the name, and in conduct which can only lead to chaos and disaster. I think, perhaps, I cannot drive the point home better than by quoting intact the last section of Dr. Darwell Stone's article in the *Church Quarterly Review* for April 1910: "It is a tendency of the present age to shrink from the harder and sterner forms of thought and action. This tendency, in part, results from circumstances of life. The progress in civilisation, the increase of comfort, the improvement of social conditions, the advance in medical and surgical methods, the desire to rule rather by reason than by command—all these tend towards a shrinking from hardship, whether to be borne or to be inflicted. Hence it is a danger of our time to be too unwilling to assert clear and definite issues, too slow to recognise the inevitableness of facts. The saying of Bishop

Butler : 'Things and actions are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be,'<sup>1</sup> never needed emphasizing more than it does now. Part of the emphasis lies in a right recognition of responsibility concerning intellectual truth ; and an element in that responsibility is the preservation of the Creeds. Sympathy with research, patience with hesitation, recognition of courage and candour, determination not unduly to narrow the limits of the Church, appreciation of the difficulties which beset inquirers and students in every age, are all called for in full measure by the movements of to-day. That aspect of official Anglican policy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, by which it would not treat as of faith anything for which the authority of œcumenical conciliar decision could not be seen, needs a counterpart at the present time. But we may not make the Christian religion something other than it is by ceasing to assert the reality of those miraculous facts, the negation of which would not renew the life but hasten the death of Christian faith."

Perhaps, by these examples, I have trenched on the next two forms of endurance which I mentioned, viz. emotional and moral. But the spheres of intellect, emotion, and morality are not watertight compartments. In any decision of how much or

<sup>1</sup> *Fifteen Sermons*. Sermon vii. c. 16.



how little one ought to do, there must be a blending of judgment, the intellectual element, with will and feeling, the moral and emotional factors.

It is well, perhaps, to recollect that while feeling is not, at any rate, wholly controllable—though the expression of it is—judgment and will are. Love, *e.g.*, cannot be felt and exercised just because we believe we *ought* to feel it; but we can by the deliberate use of judgment and will abstain from unloving thoughts, words, and actions. Hardly do most of us, I fancy, realise how much, in this matter, depends on our wills, on sheer hard resolution to stick to a thing, whatever it may cost, no matter what feeling may prompt us to do. Fr. Stuckey Coles has put this point clearly :

“Strong feeling is not sufficient security for the permanence of loyal affection. . . . Feeling cannot be summoned at will; dutiful action is always within the power of the will. . . . Love cannot safely undertake her office without the aid of duty, and duty cannot but desire the sanction of love. Yet, when love is absent, and mutual relations are ordained, much can be done by duty. . . . At least, I will do my duty. At least I will remember that GOD has caused or sanctioned the relation which I cannot lay aside without sin. He will then enable me at least to do my duty, and, in the end, He will crown duty with love.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Lenten Meditations*, by the Rev. V. S. S. Coles, pp. 134, 135.

I think it is well, at this point, to suggest that the hardness which we may be called upon to endure is not necessarily negative, a hardness of *renunciation* : it may be positive, something not to be given up, but to be gained. Fr. Maturin, in his most penetrating book, *Self-Knowledge and Self-Discipline*, makes this much clear. He argues that the Gospel is not, as two different types of people have been inclined to say, a Gospel of life and action *or* a Gospel of death and renunciation ; but it is both at one and the self-same moment, always, everywhere. It is two-sided. Sometimes, and for some people, the hardness is one of giving up, of going without, of self-emptying, self-stripping : but very often it is found in some process of development which we are called upon to undergo, some form of self-improvement. It is then suffered not in extinguishing but in perfecting ; not in tearing away but in drawing out ; not in annihilating but in changing. And only those of us who know the dreadful charms of slothful ease, the subtle dire temptation of just letting what we are pleased to call "well" alone, only those of us realise what the hardness is which is involved in dragging ourselves out of our partial achievements, toiling up the steep of perfection, when the goal seems so far, and the reaching of it so improbable.

And then there is the endurance of spiritual hardness, which possibly is the worst of all : when,

e.g., we are the victims of depression, theologically known as the sin of *accidie*; or of "dryness," that trial of the Saints, and of many among us who are, alas! far enough from sanctity; or, harder even than either perhaps, when we are struggling against that ever-present, subtle thing, double-mindedness.

John Cassian, in his *Institutes*, which he wrote somewhere between A.D. 419 and 426, says: "Our sixth combat is with what the Greeks call ἀκηδία, which we may term weariness or distress of heart. This is akin to dejection, and is especially trying to solitaries, and a dangerous and frequent foe to dwellers in the desert, and especially disturbing to a monk about the sixth hour,<sup>1</sup> like some fever which seizes him at stated times, bringing the burning heat of its attacks on the sick man at usual and regular hours. Lastly there are some of the elders who declare that this is the 'midday demon' spoken of in the ninetieth Psalm."

This last reference is to the Vulgate, which, following the Septuagint, reads: "Non timebis a timore nocturno, A sagitta volante in die, a negotio perambulante in tenebris, ab incursu, et dæmonio meridiano," i.e. "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, for the arrow flying in the day, for the trouble walking in darkness, for the assault, or for the noonday demon." Whatever the "noon-day demon" may be, it is a more arresting idea

<sup>1</sup> i.e. 12 noon.



than our English phrase, "the sickness that destroyeth in the noonday."

In Book x., ch. ii. of the *Institutes*, Cassian writes forcibly of the corrupting power of accidie or dejection ; but, to show how the disease is not intellectual but spiritual, I will take a short sentence from ch. iv. "All the inconveniences," he says, "of this disease are admirably expressed by David in a single verse, where he says, 'My soul slept from weariness,' that is, from accidie." Here again Cassian is quoting the Vulgate, which follows the Septuagint: *Dormitavit anima mea præ tædio*.<sup>1</sup> The English version perhaps intensifies the point: *My soul melteth away for very heaviness*. Cassian adds, "Quite rightly does he say not that his body but his soul sleeps." Yet we must not exaggerate the absolute separation of the two, for, as S. Catharine of Siena said, "Every work, good or bad, is done by means of the body."<sup>2</sup>

It would be possible to spend much time in elaborating the deadly, soul-destroying results of dejection allowed, encouraged, cultivated ; that grey mood of discontent mainly with everybody and everything outside one's self, and finally, partly with one's self as well ; a mood, not of regret for this or that ill done, or good left undone, not of sorrow for some loss or inevitable

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxviii. 28.

<sup>2</sup> *A Treatise of Discretion* (translated by Algar Thorold), p. 116.

suffering, but the mood, the sluggish, indefinite, weary mood of dissatisfaction about things in general. But it is unnecessary to do it afresh. The late Bishop of Oxford, in his well-known book, *The Spirit of Discipline*, both in the Preface to the Seventh Edition and in the Introductory Essay, has dealt with accidie, historically, as to the idea, and ethically, as to the treatment. Dr. Paget wrote of accidie as "the gloom of those who ought not to be sad, who wilfully allow a morbid sombreness to settle down on them: it is a mood which severs a man from thoughts of GOD, and 'suffers him not to be calm and kindly to his brethren.'" <sup>1</sup> Elsewhere, he described it as "that listless, joyless, fruitless, hopeless, restless indolence, more tiring and exacting than the hardest work, more sensitive in its dull forgetfulness than any state of bodily suffering." <sup>2</sup>

I have the more gladly quoted these words, because Dr. Paget deliberately assigned as one cause of accidie—indeed he gave it the first place—our increasing distaste for enduring hardness. He quotes from Chaucer (who in *The Parson's Tale* dwells on this sin) the fine phrase, or paraphrase rather, "A virtue that is called strength;" and he glosses it as "the wise and reasonable undertaking of hard things." Then, he continues: "In accidie, a man exaggerates the interval and

<sup>1</sup> *The Spirit of Discipline*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

the difficulties which lie between himself and high attainment . . . the real hardness of that which is noble seems in his imagination nearer and nearer to impossibility ; with increasing shamelessness, he declines the venture which is an element in most things that are worth doing, and a condition of all spiritual progress, and so he settles down into a deepening despondency. . . . And from such despondency the more positive traits of accidie are seldom very far removed ; resentment, fretfulness, irritation, anger, easily find access to a heart that is refusing to believe in the reasonableness of lofty aims, and lazily contenting itself with a low estimate of its hopes, its powers, and its calling. Plainly, that which men are losing, that of which they are falling out of sight, when they sink back into this dangerous and dismal plight, is the grace, the virtue, the sense of duty and shame, which should lead them to the wise and reasonable undertaking of hard things. They ought to be steadily repelling the temptation to think any fresh thing impossible or indispensable to them.”<sup>1</sup> Well, experience may be our guide here, our own for each of us, in so far as we know, or ought to know, ourselves best. Is it not true, whether in the pages of History, or, as it seems to us, in the more commonplace tale of our daily lives, is it not true that “accidie” never

<sup>1</sup> *The Spirit of Discipline*, pp. 40, 41.

stains the lives of the Knights-errant of GOD? Is it not true of us, who deserve no such title, that depression never rules those hours when we have the grace to do hard things for duty's sake, when we resolutely refuse to think a task impossible, when we bend all our courage to part with things, or even people, because we cannot dare to permit ourselves to call them indispensable?

I have spent so much space on this form of spiritual hardness that I have left none for the other two which I mentioned. As to "dryness" or desolation, remember the unforgettable picture which in her Autobiography S. Teresa drew of "aridity and indisposition for prayer and for every good work."<sup>1</sup> Nor should we omit the prayer, in her desolation, of Mechthild of Magdeburg—whom Evelyn Underhill calls "that sunshiny saint"—"LORD, since Thou hast taken from me all that I had of Thee, yet of Thy grace leave me the gift which every dog has by nature: that of being true to Thee in my distress, when I am deprived of all consolation. This I desire more fervently than Thy heavenly kingdom."<sup>2</sup>

It sometimes seems as if some people fail to see what a fundamental source of weakness and ill-doing is to be found in a halting temper, in half-heartedness, in double-mindedness. If anyone seriously

<sup>1</sup> *Life of S. Teresa*, written by Herself, ch. xxx. § 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Das Fliessende Licht der Gottheit*, pt. ii. ch. 25.

doubt its insidious danger, or doubt the genuine hardness which is involved in the struggle to overcome it, perhaps Dr. Paget, in *The Spirit of Discipline*, in his Sermon therein, called Half-Heartedness, may settle such doubts once and for all. One sentence must suffice here: "Double-mindedness . . . keeps men back from the task that was marked with their name; it takes the spring and brightness out of life: it is the foe of inner freedom, and of all health and strength, and growth and peace."<sup>1</sup>

I really do not know how one could describe the hardness of this half-intellectual, half-spiritual difficulty, if Dr. Paget's words fail to carry conviction.

All this time, I have been discussing what hardness is, and the different guises in which it may come to any or all of us. It remains to try to show *why* it should be endured. Of course for those who think a question is sufficiently settled by a single text from the Bible, there is S. Paul's exhortation to S. Timothy: "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of JESUS Christ." But, in these criticising days, that may well be supplemented if not by proof, at least by elaboration. I say "not by proof," because anything like really rigid proof of the kind we demand in such positive sciences as Mathematics,

<sup>1</sup> *The Spirit of Discipline*, p. 154.



is not available in the human sciences, and certainly not in philosophy and religion. The spheres of thought are different entirely, therefore logical demonstration must yield the palm to a mood in which reason, feeling, and intuition must all play a part, if not precisely an equal one.

I suppose the one supreme argument—using that word rather in the sense of a persuasive plea than of a set proof—is to be found in the contemplation of our Blessed LORD'S Passion, taking that as the sum and crown of all His suffering Life. But this contemplation is not so easy as people sometimes seem to think. We are, we have for so long been, so familiar with the Gospel accounts, that the danger of missing their profoundest meanings is real and increasing. We have heard the story so often that the dreadful details of all that Bitter Way may, as it were, just wash over our minds and pass, leaving us still unaware, untouched, chill.

But let us for once review them deliberately, intently: think of the moment when Judas, having just received the "sop," went out to his traitor's task, went out to *sell* Him Who had been his Master, his Teacher, his Friend, Who, in that supreme hour, had made a supreme effort to draw him back from the brink of irrevocable loss; consider the fear, the troubled desolation, the accumulated woe, the horror of loneliness in Gethsemane; consider, deeper depth than the original going-

forth, Judas' betraying kiss ; recollect the headlong flight of *all* those (S. Peter and S. John among them) who had been His closest friends :

“ ‘ Forsake the Christ thou sawest transfigured, Him  
Who trod the sea, and brought the dead to life ?  
What should wring this from thee ! ’ ye laugh and ask.  
What wrung it ? Even a torch-light and a noise,  
The sudden Roman faces, violent hands,  
And fear of what the Jews might do ! Just that,  
And it is written, ‘ I forsook and fled ! ’ ”

Think of the humiliating examinations before Annas, before Caiaphas : recall the moment when, the doors of the High Priest's Judgment Hall being opened, our LORD descended the steps into that outer Court, and the sounds which met His ears were the words of the Prince of the Apostles, as he declared with oaths and blasphemies, “ I know not this man of whom ye speak.” Think of the bandying about between Pilate and Herod ; the binding to the pillar for that cruel, pitiless scourging, the crowning with thorns, the buffeting, the insults. Remember the rough stripping-off of His garments which the weight of the Cross must have forced into the wounds made by the scourging ; the stretching upon the “sour cross,” the nailing of those Hands which made us and fashioned us, of those Feet which had ever gone about doing good ; the raising of the Cross, the dreadful jolting as it fell into position. And, from begin-



ning to end, all that was accompanied by rancorous mockery, blasphemous, coarse, vulgar jesting, driven home to the Sacred Heart by the fact that His closest friends had all forsaken Him and fled. For, after all, what is there bitterer than love's betrayals? And then, last of all, came that poignant question, "My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and the hardly less terrible cry of the pain-wrung Body, "I thirst."

All this, we have known from our youth up : yes, perhaps so familiarly that we have slipped into forgetting what it means, why it was necessary, *what it has to do with us*. It is just as well sometimes to remind ourselves that it was not necessary because, at some indefinite time, a vague someone was vaguely what he ought not to have been, but because you and I, here and now, are what we are, and have been what we have been.

No doubt, there are people who delight to dwell upon tragedies, specially when they themselves are lapped in comfort : it is pleasant to some to sit at ease and read a painful story, or to occupy a stall to see the *Ædipus Rex* ; the contrast is, I suppose, so satisfying.

But our LORD'S Passion is not to be treated like that. It was suffered "for us men and for our salvation" ; and being suffered It has left not a legacy of sentimental admiration, but a path of woe to tread, a life of pain to lead—"Christianity

at its highest clings to the Via Dolorosa" <sup>1</sup>—unless we are to suppose that S. Paul's mysterious words meant nothing—"I Paul . . . fill up that which is behind" (lacking) "of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for His Body's sake, which is the Church." <sup>2</sup>

There is no way of escape. Our LORD's bitter Life and Death were suffered for us, but not suffered that we should go scot-free: there is, to the end will be, "His Body's sake which is the Church." And it is useless to try to sweep away meditations on His Passion with any talk about hysteria. We are to contemplate It, not in any mood of self-indulgent sentimentality, but that we may grieve for our sins which caused It, and amend our sinful lives by His example; that we may learn that comfort is of no account whatever in the Eternal Battle, that ease and pleasure are outside the calculations of those who "ride in the lists with the Only Fair."

It would be a bold man who would accuse Dr. Pusey of sentimentality or hysteria: and yet it is well known that his reflection on lying down in bed at night was, habitually, that he deserved to be in hell; which reminds us of Richard Rolle, "My dear-worthy LORD hanged on the Rood for me, and I lie in this soft bed." <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Mustard Tree*, Fr. Vassall-Phillips, p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Our Daily Work*, p. 150.

Possibly, most people think of the writer who chose to call herself John Oliver Hobbes as a brilliant novelist, as an ornament of Society with a big S. And yet, she once wrote to the intimate friend to whom she committed some of her most private thoughts, these words: "The Gospel narratives of the Passion move me so profoundly that I cannot read them oftener than once a year. They unfit me utterly for work, for companionship, for the business of life."<sup>1</sup>

Well, as was said before, the formality of logical proof yields place to intuition, led by reason, coloured by feeling. So perhaps, in answer to the question—What connexion is there or ought there to be between our LORD's Life and ours; what has His example to do with our endurance?—an answer may be found in Thomas à Kempis' piercing question, "*Tota vita Christi crux fuit et martyrium, et tu tibi quaeris requiem et gaudium?*" ("Christ's whole Life was a Cross and a martyrdom, and dost thou seek for thyself rest and joy?")

If anyone will argue that to follow our LORD in His sufferings is impossible for mortal man, that hardness may be desirable, but that hardness in that extreme sense is simply out of the question, let us turn to the Saints, the Mystics. They, at any rate, were once men and women like ourselves. What was *their* attitude to hardness?

<sup>1</sup> *Life of John Oliver Hobbes*, p. 327.

“What canst Thou do, O my LORD, that is not for the greater good of that soul which Thou knowest to be already Thine, and which gives itself up to Thee whithersoever Thou goest, even to the death of the Cross; and which is determined to help Thee to carry that Cross, and not to leave Thee alone with it,” so wrote S. Teresa in her Autobiography: <sup>1</sup> “determined to help Thee to carry that Cross, and not to leave Thee alone with it”—words as daring as S. Paul’s. Again, she writes, “I wish to suffer, because Thou, O LORD, hast suffered.” <sup>2</sup> And again, “It is certain that the love of GOD does not consist in tears, nor in this sweetness and tenderness which we for the most part desire, and with which we console ourselves; but rather in serving Him in justice, fortitude, and humility.” <sup>3</sup> Her chosen motto, “I suffer or I die,” is of course familiar to us all.

“Think not,” said Tauler, “that GOD will be always caressing His children, or shine upon their head, or kindle their hearts as He does at the first. He does so only to lure us to Himself, as the falconer lures the falcon with its gay hood. . . . We must stir up and rouse ourselves, and be content to leave off learning, and no more enjoy feeling and fire, and must now serve the LORD with strenuous industry and at our own cost.” <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Life of S. Teresa*, written by Herself, ch. xi. § 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. xi. § 20.

<sup>4</sup> Sermon for the 4th Sunday in Lent.

"One desire only doth GOD allow and suffer in His presence, that of perfectly observing His law, and of carrying the Cross of Christ,"<sup>1</sup> wrote S. John of the Cross.

Perhaps Richard Rolle sounds less extreme than some of the other Mystics have been in condemnation of self-indulgence, love of softness, and so forth : but I think the real difference only exists in the sober Englishman's unemotional mode of expression. Carried into practice, Richard Rolle's injunctions would not leave us much more scope for self-pleasing than do those of S. John of the Cross : "So worthy a thing is the comfort of GOD that it will not rest in a breast where other comfort is. So delicious is the liking in Him that with no other liking can it accord. Whoso yearns after other comfort to glad himself with, witnesses that he withstands GOD's grace ; unless it be honest comfort betimes that he may thereby glad his nature with and better serve GOD."<sup>2</sup>

Of S. Catharine of Genoa we are told that for four years, "*for the purpose of self-conquest*," "she wore a hair-shirt ; she never touched either flesh-meat or fruit, whether fresh or dried ; she lay at night on thorns."<sup>3</sup>

This may of course suggest the comparison

<sup>1</sup> *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, ch. v. § 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Our Daily Work*, Richard Rolle.

<sup>3</sup> *The Mystical Element of Religion*, Baron F. von. Hügel, vol. i. p. 131.



of bodily and spiritual hardness. Perhaps it is true to say that all of us feel bodily hardness, though apparently in differing degrees, but that spiritual hardness is most felt by those who have made at least some progress along the road to that entire Purification of the Self which is the aim of the Mystics. To ordinary people, who have no claim whatever to be called by that name, self-denial, the endurance of hardness may come in extremely prosaic ways, the very commonplaceness adding to the natural unattractiveness: and some of us perhaps, if we looked a little closer, with rather more intelligent eyes, might see that, while, under a sense of duty, we had been providing ourselves with artificial means of discomfort, really excellent opportunities of genuine self-denial had occurred in our daily lives, which we had quite overlooked.

As I said above, the main reason why we should endure hardness is to be found in the fact that our LORD, Who is "unto us both a Sacrifice for sin and also an Ensample of daily life," endured hardness in Life and Death, and that His Saints have essayed to follow Him along that same path.

But still the questions might be asked, *Why* did He do it? *Why* does He ask us to do it? There must be some reason for the endurance of all this which is so naturally repugnant to us, all this which even our LORD Himself found hard.

Well, of course, everyone knows that pain is punitive: and which of us human creatures does not deserve punishment? Moreover, it is quite clearly a cleansing, purifying power: and this is no less true because it is possible to misuse pain and allow it to deaden and brutalise us. It is also preventive and stimulative. Pain tends to prevent further action along the lines which bring it; it stirs men up to invent methods of prevention for the future: common experience of life shows us all this, and it is all a justification of the existence of pain. But Christianity has still further illumined this everyday common-sense with its own light: it has taught us that the one availing kind of sacrifice is that of *self*, not for the sake of the pain caused, but for the sake of the conquest of self. We cannot forget our LORD's emphatic invitation: "If any man," *any*, "will come after me, let him deny *himself*, and take up his cross, and follow me:"<sup>1</sup> nor Thomas à Kempis' rendering of it: "Sicut non sufficeret tibi omnibus habitis, praeter me; ita nec mihi placere poterit, quidquid dederis, te non oblato. Offer te mihi, et da te totum pro DEO, et erit accepta oblatio. . . . Si autem in te ipso steteris, nec sponte te ad voluntatem meam obtuleris, non est plena oblatio, nec integra erit inter nos unio."<sup>2</sup> ("As it would not suffice thee

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. xvi. 24.<sup>2</sup> *De Imitatione Christi*, iv. 8.



hadst thou all things save Myself, so it cannot please ME, whatever thou givest, thyself not being offered. Give thyself to Me, and give thyself whole to GOD, and the oblation will be accepted. . . . But if thou standest upon anything in thyself, it is not a complete oblation, nor shall union between us be perfect.")

"The real Christian," so it has been said, "looks at sorrow not from without, but from within, and does not approach its speculative difficulty, till he is aware by experience of its practical power."<sup>1</sup>

And lastly, in this attempt to justify the endurance of pain and hardness, I may quote the words of this same writer, where he states, I think, an obvious fact of history, and also of that which will one day be history, this everyday life: "The men of sorrows are the men of influence in every walk of life. Martyrdom is the certain road to success in any cause. Even more than knowledge, pain is power. And all this, because it develops the latent capacities of our being as no other influence can."<sup>2</sup>

There are, for example, phases of courage, of self-sacrificing love which would have no scope at all in a world from which pain and hardness had been exiled.

<sup>1</sup> *Lux Mundi* (10th ed.), p. 89. J. R. Illingworth.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

We must, however, not fall ever into the somewhat common error that "enduring hardness" necessarily involves a grim and gloomy attitude. One of the greatest Fathers of the second century, S. Clement of Alexandria, insisted often on the necessity of Christian self-denial. But he was not only careful to explain the reason for it, as follows: "These things" (*i.e.* ease and riches) "are to be abstained from not for their own sakes, but for the sake of the body; and care for the body is exercised for the sake of the soul to which it has reference;"<sup>1</sup> or again, "Our holy Saviour applied poverty and riches and the like both to spiritual things and objects of sense. . . . It is not the poor simply, but those who have wished to become poor for righteousness' sake that He pronounces blessed, those who have despised the honours of the world in order to attain the 'good'";<sup>2</sup> but S. Clement took pains to insist on the Christian duty of joy, of cheerfulness. Further, he distinctly connects together joy and endurance, *e.g.* "Let us, O children of the good Father . . . meditating on the heavenly mode of life according to which we have been deified, let us anoint ourselves with the perennial, immortal bloom of gladness—that ointment of sweet fragrance—having a clear example of immortality in the walk and conversation of the

<sup>1</sup> *Miscellanies*, iv. 5.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iv. 6.

LORD; and following the footsteps of GOD, to Whom alone it belongs to consider, and Whose care it is to see to, the way and manner in which the life of men may be made more healthy. Besides, He makes preparation for a self-sufficing mode of life, for simplicity, and for girding up our loins, and for free and unimpeded readiness of our journey; in order to the attainment of an eternity of beatitude, teaching each one of us to be our own Storehouse. For He says, 'Take no anxious thought for to-morrow,' meaning that the man who has devoted himself to Christ ought to be sufficient to himself, and servant to himself, and moreover lead a life which provides for each day by itself. For it is not in war but in peace that we are trained. War needs great preparation, and luxury craves profusion; but peace and love, simple and quiet sisters, require no arms nor excessive preparation. The Word is their sustenance.

"Our superintendence in instruction and discipline is the office of the Word, from whom we learn frugality and humility, and all that pertains to love of truth, love of man, and love of excellence."<sup>1</sup>

S. Clement, as we all know, was the distinguished head of the famous Catechetical School of Alexandria in the second century: his intellectual

<sup>1</sup> *The Pedagogue*, bk. i. ch. xii.

eminence is unchallenged, Dr. Sandys speaks of the "vast variety of his learning." Yet, simply and lucidly he declares his belief in self-stripping, self-emptying, in endurance for righteousness' sake: and he identifies such endurance with true happiness.

We may pass away from cultured Alexandria of the second century to twelfth-century Italy; and there, in the wonderful eighth chapter of the *Fioretti* of S. Francis, we learn that the very essence of "perfect happiness"—*perfect*—lies in the power to endure hardness. Four times over did S. Francis call to Brother Leo, telling him that not in sanctity, not in miracles of healing, not in knowledge whether of men or angels, is perfect joy—"O Brother Leo, thou little sheep of GOD . . . write not that therein is perfect joy."

And so, at last, Brother Leo exclaims: "Father, I pray thee, in the name of GOD, that thou tell me wherein is perfect joy." And S. Francis conjures up various pictures of misjudgment, and unkindness, and abuse, and ill-treatment, and hunger and cold and insult, and says, "If, with patience and with gladness, we suffer all these things, thinking on the pains of the blessed Christ, the which we ought to suffer for the love of Him: O Brother Leo, write that here and herein is perfect joy: then hear the conclusion of the whole matter, Brother Leo; Above all graces and

gifts of the Holy Spirit, that Christ granteth to His beloved, is to overcome oneself, and willingly for the love of Christ endure pains and insults and shame and want: inasmuch as in all other gifts of GOD we may not glory, sith they are not ours but GOD'S; whence saith the Apostle what hast thou that thou hast not received of GOD? . . . But in the cross of tribulation and affliction we may boast, sith this is ours."

And then we may shift the scene to our own day. So "modern" a poet as Stephen Phillips notes the indissoluble connexion between pain and the service of GOD. There is not space for the whole, but the following lines show the trend of his thought:

"Unshunnable is grief: we should not fear  
The dreadful bath whose cleansing is so clear.

. . . . .  
Who gave unto the Moon that hopeless quest  
Condemned the wind to wander without rest;  
He, as I think, intends that we shall rise  
Only through pain into His Paradise.  
Woe! woe! to those who placidly suspire,  
Drowned in security, remote from fire;  
Who under the dim sky and whispering trees  
By peaceful slopes and passing streams have ease;  
Whose merit is their uncommitted sins,

. . . . .  
Who watched the falling, yet who never fell,  
Shadows not yet ascended into Hell.  
No sacred pang disturbs their secular life,  
Eluding splendour and escaping strife;



They die not, for they lived not ; under earth  
 Their bodies urge the meaner flowers to birth :  
 Unstung, unfired, untempted was their soul,  
 Easy extinction is their utmost goal.  
 To those whom He doth love GOD hath not sent.  
 Such dread security, such sad content ;  
 Young are they carried to the font of pain,  
 In coldest anguish dipped again, again ;  
 Or else unto His burning are they led,  
 Desirous of His glory to be dead ;  
 When He descends like Semele they die,  
 Proud to be shrivelled in His ecstasy.

. . . . .  
 But He hath branded on such souls His name,  
 And He will know them by the scars of flame.  
 As Christ, in the dark Garden, had to drink  
 The brimming cup from which His soul did shrink ;  
 As Dante had to thread the world of fire,  
 Ere he approached the Rose of his desire ;  
 So fear not grief, fear not the anguish, thou,  
 The paining heart, the clasped and prostrate brow ;  
 This is the emblem, and this is the sign  
 By which GOD singles thee for fields divine ;  
 From such a height He stoops, from such a bliss,  
 Small wonder thou dost shudder at His kiss.”<sup>1</sup>

And then, if one turns to a contemporary theologian, one can find such words as these : “Above all this, the Christian is gay. Was there ever a more unconventionally joyful spirit than S. Paul, or any schoolboy so playful as S. Francis ? Not peace nor unison, not joy, not strength nor earnestness

<sup>1</sup> Grief and God. *New Poems*, by Stephen Phillips, p. 17.



is the *cachet* of the Christian, but gaiety. He is ever shocking worldly men, strenuous moralists, by some play of the spirit which seems sacrilegious. This gaiety is other-worldly in origin—it comes from the love of One unseen; it is grounded on the belief that nothing really matters if all things work together for good to them that love GOD, and it is nurtured by the daily denial and sacrifice which is the inevitable and invariable consequence of love."<sup>1</sup> And, lastly, there is the author who writes under the name of John Cordelier: "No vicarious atonement, then, will satisfy the instinct of the true lover of reality. He desires life with all its accidents and misfortunes: the high heroic life of the chivalry of GOD. He too must 'ride in the lists,' go with the pattern of all knighthood on the most bitter and most blessed of all quests. . . . It is true that the journey can only be undertaken at the cost of failure, humiliation, and agony: but there is no other path that will lead him to the Rose of the World. . . . Hence the hard paradox that humanity's real happiness lies in the acceptance of pain; that joyous suffering is the secret of the King. The Way of the Cross, because it goes deathwards, is the Way of Life. It is the only Way which leads back to GOD."<sup>2</sup>

There cannot be the smallest doubt in the mind

<sup>1</sup> *Hulsean Lectures*, Fr. Figgis, p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> *The Path of the Eternal Wisdom*, pp. 17, 18, 19.

of any person who looks at things as they are, as to whether or no the present generation is given over far too much to love of comfort, ease, and pleasure. Not the least depressing aspect of the spectacle is its self-defeatingness. Here, now, in spite of all our false standards and conventional views, all of us sometimes, and some of us often, are forced to admit that already, actually, in daily life over and over again, the words are absolutely true—*Esurientes implevit bonis, et divites dimisit inanes*. ("He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away.")

It is really the rich—using that word for those of all social classes who will cling at all costs to whatever measure of comfort they can achieve—it is really the rich who are poor; while those who try to strip themselves and toil for Christ's sake are rich indeed, clothed with a gladness and mirthful content in comparison with which the world's costliest treasures grow pale and wan. Fortunate mortals, above all other creatures, are Christ's Beggars, those whom He sends to hard labour: of them it may truly be said that their joy no man taketh from them.

III  
LOVE



### III

## LOVE

“The greatest of these is love.”

IN the ordinary world, Love is a word which is misused intolerably: one might almost say it is tossed about and profaned, as if men hardly understood the real nature of the great and sacred thing whose name they take so lightly in vain.

For the sake of clearness it may be well to insist on the twofold aspect of Love. We may regard it as a duty—“Love one another”—a duty which is sometimes the hardest of all those we have to perform: or we may consider it as a state to be attained. Possibly the conception of love as a duty represents the commonest view of the majority of people, and may well be treated first. To love one another is obviously a commanded duty, incumbent on every Christian. As the familiar words of S. John the Divine, “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love GOD Whom he hath not seen?” fall on our ears, perhaps sometimes, not in any spirit of profane carping but in the bitterness of an attempt

which has failed, we may some of us find ourselves saying under our breath, that it is just because we *have seen* our fellow-man—seen his duplicity, or his meanness, or his hypocrisy, or his greed, or his cruelty, or whatever it may be, and have seen him flourishing, wholly unremorseful, in the way of wickedness—just because we have seen and do see all that that we find it so desperately hard to love him in any real sense of the word. Bear with him, be silent about him, or put him out of remembrance, any of those measures we might, with an effort, take ; but to contemplate him, to realise his ways and habits and aims, and still to love him, it is that which sometimes seems so indescribably beyond our reach. More primitive people than ourselves have solved the problem with a light-heartedness which can only amaze those of us who have been perhaps called on to keep a Christian profession clean among circumstances of incredibly petty evil-doing in high or low places. For instance, in *The Poem Book of the Gael*, in the section headed Ossianic Poetry, Miss Hull prints some verses, called *Chill Winter*, whose outspoken antitheses are startling :

“ Nipping this winter’s night, the snow drifts by,  
Below the hill the boisterous billows roar ;  
’Tis bitter cold to-night the mountain o’er,  
Yet still the ungovernable stag bells forth his cry.

. . . . .



I, Caoilte, wakeful lie, and Dermot Donn,  
We, with keen Oscar of the footsteps fleet,  
Watch the slow hours of moving night retreat,  
Whilst the dread pack of hungry wolves comes on.

I sit to-night amongst the ancient race,  
And of the younger men but few I know,  
Though, in the ice-bound mornings long ago,  
From my firm grasp the javelin flew apace.

I thank Heaven's King, I thank sweet Mary's Son  
My hand it was that silenced countless men ;  
They lie stretched out beneath us in the glen,  
Colder than we, death-cold, lies many and many an one."<sup>1</sup>

But if such pious blood-thirstiness as this belong rather to ancient Israel than to modern Christianity, yet it is idle for anyone to attempt to argue that to feel anger and resentment against those who have done, and—for this is the crux—intend to go on doing wrong, even if they have done us no personal harm, is the sin of the unregenerate only. Those who remember our LORD's unmistakable, categorical command, "I say unto you, love your enemies,"<sup>2</sup> must sometimes have faltered before the strangeness of that sentence which S. Paul, according to the Authorised English Version, wrote to S. Timothy, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the LORD reward him according to his works."<sup>3</sup> The rendering

<sup>1</sup> *The Poem Book of the Gael*, by Eleanor Hull, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matt. v. 44.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 14.

"will reward him," which seems the more generally accepted, removes some but not all of the difficulty. To feel that one's foe will get his deserts, and to comment on the fact, is hardly perhaps what most of us would call love, specially in us human creatures, who, one and all, if we received our bare deserts, would be in a sorry enough case. It is not far removed from the temper of Caoilte, the Irish Chief.

Moreover, we know from other cases, that great saints have felt this difficulty, and have felt it acutely. For instance, S. Teresa writes of the Visitor of the Convent, when the latter had been an object of serious persecution: "The virtue of Fr. Gracian has shone with such brightness under the trial, that I am quite astonished. What a great treasure must not GOD have hidden in that soul, for he prays specially for those who calumniate him, and he bears their calumnies with as much joy as S. Jerome. He cannot, however, endure the false charges which our enemies have brought against the nuns." <sup>1</sup>

This passage shows two facts perfectly clearly: first, that S. Teresa recognised fully the difficulty of really praying for calumniators; she writes of it as almost a rare virtue: and, secondly, she

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of S. Teresa* (translated by the Rev. John Dalton), No. x.

admits that even Fr. Gracian, like every generous soul, did resent injustice done to others, which is perhaps the most difficult obstacle in the way of sincere genuine love. Forgiveness of our personal injuries we may, with a greater or less effort corresponding to their magnitude, achieve, and grow to love the injurer : but to love those who have more or less deliberately wrought irreparable pain in our dearest, that is a test indeed. Instances need not be multiplied : to love our brethren under all circumstances is admittedly one of the hardest of all our tasks. It is not even as if the way were clear. No one of us, let us never forget it, lives without an object of love : we may forget GOD and neglect our brethren, but no one of us omits to love the self within. We may find fault with it, and think we mean it, but we love it *quand même*. Self-love is as fatally easy as love of others is hard. It is not solely that other men strike us as dully unlovable, or as actually so malevolent in this, that, or the other way, that we can find no way of loving them : but it is often and often that our own self-love stands either openly and palpably in the way, or is a subtle cause of our failure. In the latter case we sometimes fail to discriminate our perhaps righteous anger against real and possibly deliberate ill-doing, from our annoyance or resentment at the actual harm

wrought in our own life and prospects by that ill-doing. Righteous indignation is one thing, resentment at personal injury is another; it is very hard sometimes to delimitate properly their respective spheres. When we feel the stress of this temptation to uncharity, then, not infrequently, we indulge in *pis-allers*: "I cannot really love him," so we say, "but of course I would not do him an injury; I would, if he wished, do him a good turn, though I can hardly suppose he would wish it, seeing how deeply he has injured me." Of course it is assumed that the whole difficulty arises from the fact that the injury is deliberate and is continuing. Probably no one feels the smallest difficulty in wholeheartedly forgiving an injury, *any* injury, sincerely repented of; certainly no one, with an adequate sense of his own shortcomings before GOD and man, can feel it. In the face of deliberate and continuous injury the mood which will utter such thoughts as those above may not be without some shreds of right feeling: but whatever it is, in whatever degree it may be explicable, if neither justifiable nor excusable, it most certainly is not love; it is not anything which resembles love. Or perhaps as we turn in our pain, we shift our standpoint and try a psychological excuse, saying, "Love and liking are two quite different things: we are told to love, we are not told to like all.

No one has ever succeeded in analysing that attraction which underlies all real comradeship, the state which Montaigne described when, asked to explain the reason of his friendship with Étienne de Boétie, he made the immortal unanswerable reply, 'Parce que c'était lui, parce que c'était moi : ' but the sort of love enjoined on Christians does not involve *that*." Perhaps it does not : but the love which is enjoined on Christians is not "the sort of love" we have when we have stripped it of every vestige of the feeling we have for those who are nearest and dearest to our inmost hearts.

No doubt, the difficulty is greater or less according to the particular temperament of each of us : hereditary fastidiousness is no help to loving all and sundry ; while a blessed bluntness of perception saves some people from ever knowing of their fellows' nefarious ways. But when every qualification of individual idiosyncrasy has been made, loving one's neighbours is a problem for each one, however the difficulty may vary in degree. In our better moods when we feel the obstacle is insuperable, and we ourselves incalculably far from surmounting it, perhaps we turn again, in the extremity of despair, to that incomparable passage in Richard Rolle's *Epistle on Charity* : "If thou beest not stirred against the person by anger or fell outward cheer, and have no privy hate in thine



heart for to despise him or judge him, or for to set him at naught: and the more shame and villainy he does to thee in word or in deed, the more pity and compassion thou hast of him as thou wouldest have of a man who was out of his mind, and thou thinkest thou canst not find in thine heart to hate him for love is so good in itself, but prayest for him, and helpest him, and desirest his amending, not only with thy mouth as hypocrites do, but with the affection of love in thine heart, then hast thou perfect charity to thy fellow Christian. This charity had S. Stephen perfectly, when he prayed for them who stoned him to death. This charity Christ counselled to all who would be His perfect followers, when He said thus: 'Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for those who persecute and calumniate you.' . . . Look and bethink thee how Christ loved Judas, who was both His bodily enemy and a sinful caitiff: how goodly Christ was to him; how benign; how courteous; how humble to him whom He knew to be damnable; and, nevertheless, He chose him for His Apostle, and sent him to preach with the other Apostles; He gave him power to work miracles: He showed to him the same good cheer in word and deed; also with His precious Body; and preached to him as He did to the other Apostles; He con-



demned him not openly, nor abused nor despised him, nor ever spake evil of him: and yet even though He had done all that, He would but have said the truth! And, above all, when Judas took Him, He kissed him and called him His friend. All this charity Christ showed to Judas whom He knew to be damnable. In no manner of feigning or flattering, but in soothfastness of good love and clean charity."

As we read these words, there is and can be in our hearts no other feeling than shame at our own wretched shifts and self-excusing. This, which Richard Rolle describes, is no "sort of love"; it is LOVE illimitable, LOVE unfeigned, LOVE beyond compare. And Christ our LORD was not only made to us a "sacrifice for sin," but also "an ensample of godly life." There is no way out. We may fail of our duty; we have done, we shall again: but for GOD'S sake let us at any rate abstain from lowering the standard. This impossible thing is what we have to aim at, though we fail to achieve it a thousand times. It can hardly be necessary to go on pointing out how hard it is sometimes for each and all of us to love our brethren, or to continue to elaborate the possible circumstances, or enumerate the special details of the difficulty. If there be anyone who does not know that hardness by repeated bitter experi-

ence, he must be singularly fortunate, or he is more or less than human.

But however hard we find it, there can be no possible way of escape for us, if we will meditate on our LORD'S example, one portion of which—His extraordinary Love in providing for us the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar at the very most trying, most bewildering moment of His earthly life—may perhaps come home to all alike, sensitive or somewhat obtuse as we may be. For, after all, is any moment of suffering to be compared to those which immediately precede a trial which we know to be coming? The Whole Catholic Church has seized on this moment of supreme Love, and has embedded it in the Liturgy, at the most solemn instant, viz. the Consecration Prayer of the Mass. Thus the Greek Priest says, "Who having come and having fulfilled the whole law for us, in the night in which He was betrayed, or rather gave Himself up for the life of the whole World, took bread into His holy, spotless, and faultless Hands." And the Latin Priest says, "Who, the day before He suffered, took bread into His holy and venerable Hands." And the English Priest, in the words which are so familiar to English Catholics, says, "Who, in the same night that He was betrayed, took Bread."

It was not for nothing, but rather on account

of its intense spiritual significance, that S. Paul thus accentuated the precise moment, and that the Church seized on his phrase, and has engraven it indelibly on the hearts of the Faithful.

It may seem a temerarious thing thus to turn round the order of love as S. John the Divine put it. But, surely, it was rather an appeal which he made to some, than an irrefragable law which he laid down for all. There are some remarkable passages in the *Dialogues* of S. Catharine of Siena, which may claim consideration in this connexion. In the first two, our LORD Himself speaks to the Saint in her ecstasy: "If he do not love ME, he cannot be in charity with his neighbour."<sup>1</sup> Again: "Loving ME in truth, in the same truth she" (*i.e.* the soul) "serves her neighbour.

"And it cannot be otherwise, because love of ME and of her neighbour are one and the same thing; and so far as the soul loves ME, she loves her neighbour, because love towards him issues from ME."<sup>2</sup>

The third passage is dealing with a somewhat different matter, but identically the same thought closes it:

"Holy discretion is a prudence which cannot

<sup>1</sup> *A Treatise of Divine Providence* (translated by Algar Thorold), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

be cheated, a fortitude which cannot be beaten, a perseverance from end to end, stretching from Heaven to Earth—that is, from knowledge of ME to knowledge of self, and from love of ME to love of others.”<sup>1</sup>

Later she writes of “the third state, which is a perfect state, in which they taste charity and give birth to it on their neighbours,” and of “the fourth state, which is one of perfect union with ME;” and she adds: “The two last-mentioned states are united—that is to say, one cannot be without the other, for there cannot be love of ME without love of the neighbour, nor love of the neighbour without love of ME.”<sup>2</sup> These solemn words must arrest the unforgiving.

There is only one way to love man, and that is to love GOD first. This is not to say that we may not have loved individual men who attracted us, have loved them in the way of spontaneous, natural friendship—“parce que c’était lui, parce que c’était moi”—before we attained to, perhaps even before we thought much about, the love of GOD. But that proves nothing—“do not even the publicans so?” The goal we cannot reach, cannot even dream of reaching until we have come to love GOD, is love for the distasteful and despicable; love for the

<sup>1</sup> *A Treatise of Discretion*, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> *A Treatise of Prayer*, p. 170.

drab and dreary; love for those whose sins are mean and coarse. The Prophet Hosea wrote wonderful words describing GOD's treatment of his sinful, actively sinning, people: "I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers and forgot ME, saith the LORD.

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her."<sup>1</sup>

Commenting on the word *therefore*, which breaks in so strangely upon our expectation of consequences which seem to us natural, inevitable, Dr. Pusey wrote: "The inference is not what we should have expected. Sin and forgetfulness of GOD are not the natural causes of and inducements to mercy. But GOD deals not with us as we act one to another. Extreme misery and degradation revolt man; man's miseries invite GOD's mercies. GOD *therefore* has mercy not because we deserve it, but because we need it. He *therefore* draws us because we are so deeply sunken. He prepareth the soul by those harder means, and then the depths of her misery cry to the depths of His Compassion, and because chastisement alone would stupefy her,

<sup>1</sup> Hosea ii. 13, 14.



not melt her, He always changes His wrath into mercy, and speaks to the heart which for her salvation He has broken."

There, in two sentences, is the real crux of the position—"GOD deals not with us as we act to one another." . . . "GOD therefore has mercy not because we deserve it, but because we need it."

Monsignor Benson, recently, has thrown some light on the same difficult problem, from a slightly different standpoint. "Certainly in one sense," he writes, "the soul lost in sin has lost Christ—His presence is no longer in the soul by grace, yet in another sense, and an appallingly real and tragic one, Christ is there still. If a sinner merely drove Christ away by his sin, we could let such a soul go: it is because, in S. Paul's terrifying phrase, the sinful soul holds Christ still, 'crucifying' Him, and 'making Him a mockery,' that we cannot bear to leave him to himself. Such a soul . . . is still in a state of probation, and therefore still holds her Saviour in mystical bonds and fetters. . . . From such a soul, therefore, our Lover cries with the bitterest pathos of all, Have mercy on ME, O my friends . . . in the soul of this sinner I am powerless. I speak, but I am not heard; I struggle, and am struck down. 'Attend and see if there be any sorrow like to MY sorrow.' . . . Behold, I thirst."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Friendship of Christ*, by Robert Hugh Benson, p. 89.



If Fr. Benson had left it here, it might seem as though the concern were not, after all, for the sinner. But he goes on to elaborate, and in the course of his explanation he says, "We have, in a word, to make the best of him and not the worst (as our LORD does for ourselves every time He forgives us our sins), to forgive his trespasses as we hope GOD will forgive our own. To recognise Christ in the sinner is not only to Christ's service, but to the sinner's as well ;"<sup>1</sup> words which restore the human balance. This side of the matter is still further brought out in the next chapter, *Christ in the Average Man*. It is perfectly obvious that Fr. Benson feels the natural human difficulty of loving the average person, whose unattractiveness loses nothing in his ably descriptive hands. When he has made the average person irredeemably so, then he tells us that "In our neighbour . . . and in the average plane in which he and we move . . . we have to find Him Who inhabits eternity. . . . To do this perfectly and consistently is Sanctity."<sup>2</sup>

It is indeed. Fr. Benson adds, "To find Him here is to find Him everywhere. . . . And there is no short cut to Sanctity."

We may feel depressed with the outlook at first. We are so far from sanctity, and the task seems so

<sup>1</sup> *The Friendship of Christ*, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 98.

hard. None the less, the light may dawn out of these pages. It is not quite the same lesson as that taught by Hosea, but if the two courses of instruction be combined, we are left with no way out save the path of right-doing. We surely have grasped by this that we are *bound* to do everything that in us lies to love our neighbours: and here we are taught that by following GOD's great way with us, not our own natural bad one, and by looking for GOD in our fellows—that is, by looking persistently and doggedly for our brother's best not worst side, the side still irradiated by the "light which lighteth every man"—we shall at last have set our feet in the only path which can lead to the only possible right goal for a Christian.

There is another reason, soundly psychological, why we should try to find GOD in our brethren. It is always useless to drag up only: a space emptied and left empty, will fill itself in its own ways. It is equally useless to dwell relentlessly on difficulties. We cannot drive out ill-feeling, for example, by main force: we cannot extirpate it by violently destroying the circumstances. A bad thing may sometimes be extruded, but it is only kept out if the place it occupied be filled by something else. If, then, we will first follow Hosea's guidance, and bring ourselves to contemplate the *misery* entailed on a person by being bad, then

compassion may spring up in our heart, it may grow like a tender plant and take the place of that coarse rank weed, sheer personal irritable vexation : and compassion, after all, is often Love's road-maker.

Then, if we follow Monsignor Benson's way, and try to see our LORD in the soul of our fellow-sinner, we shall really be looking at GOD. We cannot look at Him truly and not love Him : love and contemplation act and react : slowly we come to begin "to see Him as He is." Then comes the dreadful moment of awakening, when, having caught some glimpse of the reality of GOD, we see ourselves in piteous contrast to Him. Now, at last, surely we are on the road to love our neighbour ? Awed immeasurably by our Vision of GOD, shamed ineffably by the sight of ourselves in that blinding light, we take a side glance at our fellow-men. Are they—the worst, or the merely average, whichever it be who try us most—are they, after all, much worse than we are ? Different, no doubt ; but worse ? Hardly.

Even if honesty compel us to answer that from an absolute standpoint we think they are worse, *i.e.* if truth compel us to say, "No ! *that* I never should have done," the question still remains—the only question that matters—are they comparatively worse ; or, to put it more clearly, taking

their whole circumstances and ours fully into account, is there much to choose? The answer now is, in all probability, not nearly so overwhelmingly in our favour; possibly the balance inclines to our fellow-men, while our chances kick the beam.

To see one's self is as salutary as it is humiliating. But it is not always quite easy to do it. We see ourselves "in solitude," so Dr. Pusey said. That is one cogent argument against the increasing destruction of solitude from our midst. The plea for solitude which J. S. Mill uttered in that so unlikely place, his book on Political Economy, may still be remembered by some. But Dr. Pusey set forth the supreme reason of its value. Speaking of the human soul in solitude, he wrote: "Here, she learns and so unlearns her sins, sees and hates herself, sees and loves GOD." He adds a necessary warning from S. Gregory the Great: "The solitude of the body availeth not, unless there be solitude of the heart."<sup>1</sup>

There is one more consideration of rare convincingness. It is possible to think that one called upon so often, as S. Catharine of Siena was, to act in difficult "affairs," might have a keen sense of the shortcomings of average humanity, a some-

<sup>1</sup> *The Minor Prophets, with a Commentary*, Dr. E. B. Pusey, vol. i. p. 82.

what intensified knowledge of the real hardness of loving all and sundry in all circumstances. However that may be, there is in her Dialogue an atmosphere of love, real genuine love, which is irresistible. Whatever his difficulties, or provocations, can any man, who has once realised what he himself is in the eyes of GOD—realised it, that is, so far as a human being may—can he withstand the following plea: “The soul that knows ME, immediately expands to the love of her neighbour, because she sees that I love that neighbour ineffably, and so, herself, loves the object which she sees ME to have loved still more. She further knows that she can be of no use to ME, and can in no way repay ME that pure love with which she feels herself to be loved by ME, and therefore endeavours to repay it through that medium which I have given her, viz. her neighbour, who is the medium through which you can all serve ME. For, as I have said to thee, you can perform all virtues by means of your neighbour, I have given you all creatures in general and in particular, according to the diverse graces each has received from ME, to be ministered unto by you; you should therefore love them with the same pure love with which I have loved you. That pure love cannot be returned directly to ME, because I have loved you without being Myself loved, and without any consideration



of Myself whatever, for I loved you without being loved by you—before you existed: it was, indeed, love that moved ME to create you in My own image and similitude. This love you cannot repay to ME, but you can pay it to My rational creatures, loving your neighbour without being loved by him and without consideration of your own advantage, whether spiritual or temporal, but loving him solely for the praise and glory of My Name, because he has been loved by ME.

“Thus will you fulfil the commandment of the law, to love ME above everything, and your neighbour as yourselves.

“True, indeed, is it that this height cannot be reached without passing through the second stage, namely, the second stage of union, which becomes the third (and final) stage. Nor can it be preserved when it has been reached if the soul abandon the affection from which it has been developed, the affection to which the second class of tears belongs. It is therefore impossible to fulfil the law given by ME, the Eternal GOD, without fulfilling that of your neighbour, for these two laws are the feet of your affection by which the precepts and counsels are observed, which were given you, as I have told thee, by My Truth, Christ crucified.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A Treatise of Prayer*, pp. 194, 195.



It surely is not too much to say that S. Catharine of Siena seems to have been taught that the *order* of love is not universally that which appears in S. John's exhortation, an exhortation which has perhaps been unduly stretched beyond his original meaning?

More or less naturally, we find that the first aspect of Love, Love as an enjoined duty, leads on to that other aspect when Love becomes at last a condition, a state. But there is really an intervening stage, a stage than which some of us get no farther in this life. We not only have laid upon us the duty of learning to love our human fellows, but really many, perhaps most, of us learn first the higher Love, Love of GOD, as a duty; and not till later on does it become wholly a privilege: this latter being, of course, as it were, the threshold of, or entrance-hall to, that state of Love which is the perfection of existence, the goal of life. Harsh term though "duty" may seem to be and is to apply to that which is our highest privilege and honour, yet it is obviously our duty to love GOD; our LORD said, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy GOD." Nevertheless, love viewed as a duty may be freed from all taint of self-interest: does not S. Teresa bid us to rise from grudging, sordid views of it: "Place all your happiness in carrying the Cross of Christ, and make no account

of consolations : such things belong only to soldiers who wished to be paid by the day. Serve GOD *gratis*, as great men do their king.”<sup>1</sup> S. Teresa’s letters are full of this kind of humorous practicalness, which she allows to shine through her wonderful religious ardour and devotion. Precisely the same thought inspires S. Francis Xavier’s immortal hymn, where devotion is purged to the point of pure flame :

“My GOD, I love Thee ; not because  
I hope for heaven thereby,  
Nor yet because who love Thee not  
Must burn eternally.

Not with the hope of gaining aught,  
Not seeking a reward ;  
But as Thyself hast lovèd me,  
O ever-loving LORD.”

Love is not to be mistaken, as many do mistake it, for some weakly emotional or sensuous condition ; it depends on the will’s action ; it is feeling shot through with will. This voluntary activity, which is at once a duty and a privilege, is not easy always to us men on this dusty, sin-stained earth. It asks for willing exertion, often for great exertion, on our part. The harder the duty of loving seems, the greater scope is there

<sup>1</sup> *The Letters of S. Teresa* (translated by the Rev. J. Dalton), No. xli.

for the will's intervention: and sometimes the will appears to be utterly inert. It is certain that the will's response to this duty is always, sooner or later, met with reward: "When I love GOD with my will, I transform myself into Him," said S. Bernard with an audacity which almost takes one's breath away: but in the next sentence he shows his meaning: "For this is the power or virtue of love, that it maketh thee to be like unto that which thou lovest."<sup>1</sup> The reward is the highest of which mortal man can dream, viz. union with GOD: "It is love only that unites the soul and GOD,"<sup>2</sup> said S. John of the Cross.

Human activity is highly complex, and so it comes about that will is not the only force which we must exert; there is in all genuine Love an intellectual element as well, though men sometimes seem to forget or to deny this deliberately. The saints do not doubt the intellectual factor: "For to love is the end why we are to think and meditate," said S. Juan de Avila. Intellect alone will not avail: "By love He may be gotten and holden, but by thought of understanding never."<sup>3</sup> Yet thought has its place and function here. S. Teresa who, in the twenty-eighth chapter of her

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in the "Soliloquies" attributed to S. Bonaventura, ex. i.

<sup>2</sup> *The Dark Night of the Soul*, II. xviii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ch. vi.

*Life*, describes herself as "so dull of understanding," and employs the humorous figure, "My understanding can take in only, as they say, what is given it to eat," yet in an earlier chapter has taught the use of understanding in mental prayer, and the end of mental prayer is, of course, love. "Our spiritual life," wrote George Tyrrell, "is a life of thoughts, words, and actions." And again: "Our life for all eternity will be a life, not of speaking and doing, but of contemplating and loving—an interior life. 'This is life eternal, that they should *know* Thee.'"<sup>1</sup> In the *knowledge* of GOD, then, must be thought as well as love. Nothing has been gained, though much has often been lost, by men's impoverishing habit of denying the value of this, that, or the other part of their human nature.

Yet in this complex activity, which we call love, will remains the predominant power: "The soul," says S. John of the Cross, "when it shall have driven away from itself all that is contrary to the divine will, becomes transformed in GOD by love."<sup>2</sup>

And again he writes, "That soul therefore has greater communion with GOD, which is most advanced in love—that is, whose will is most con-

<sup>1</sup> *Hard Sayings*, pp. 17, 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, II. v. 3.

formable to the will of GOD. And that soul which has reached perfect conformity and resemblance is perfectly united with and supernaturally transformed in love." <sup>1</sup>

One final quotation must suffice in the attempt to make clear the inexplicable, to imprison in finite speech the mysteries of infinity: "The fitting disposition for this union is not that the soul should understand, taste, feel, or imagine anything on the subject of the nature of GOD, or any other thing whatever, but only that pureness and love, which is perfect resignation, and complete detachment from all things for GOD alone." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, § 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, II. v. 8.





#### IV

### THE DIRECT VISION OF GOD



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### THE DIRECT VISION OF GOD

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in His holy place?”

It seems wise, even necessary, to begin by drawing a clear distinction between indirect and direct knowledge. By indirect knowledge, we mean something which we know not by meeting it face to face, and seeing it there and then, but something which we come to know by means of an intermediate process. We may know it by the often imperfect medium of hearsay, if we can truly be said to *know* at all in that fashion. Or, we may arrive at it by inference or deduction, according to logical rules, from some other propositions already known to us: as *e.g.* when in geometry we deduce a new conclusion from premises previously established. Direct knowledge, on the other hand, is that which we arrive at without any intermediary; propositions which claim our assent the instant we meet and understand them; self-evident truths which no rational processes can make any clearer. For example,

if there be anyone who cannot "see" that "two straight lines cannot enclose a space," no way of putting it, no explanation, no reasoning can make him. He sees it "directly" or not at all. The distinction is between reasoned conclusion and immediate experience or intuition. Fr. Tyrrell, in his Preface to *Mother Julian of Norwich*, wrote: "Nor should we ever in case of conflict be swayed by mere reasoning to disbelieve what experiment has proved true. At the very best, we should wait for some theory that would include and not contradict our experience, and we should hold our own doctrine as even theoretically truer in life and practice." <sup>1</sup>

Direct and indirect knowledge may concern philosophical or religious truth. When direct knowledge is of religious truth, it is known as Mysticism; therefore the title of this paper, The Direct Vision of God, implies Mysticism. Baron Von Hügel writes: "Man's emotional and volitional, his ethical and spiritual powers are met and fed by the third side of religion, the Experimental and Mystical. Here religion is rather felt than seen and reasoned about, is loved and lived rather than analysed, is action and power rather than either external fact or intellectual verification." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mother Julian of Norwich*, edited by Fr. George Tyrrell, pp. xi. x.

<sup>2</sup> *Mystical Element of Religion*, vol. i. p. 53.

Perhaps the Flemish Mystic, Johann Ruysbroeck, with his distinction between the "secret friends of GOD and His Mystical Children," makes the matter even clearer. Of the Secret Friends, those on the lower plane, he writes: "Their interior life, even in its best moments, is tied by reason and human standards. They may understand the powers of the intellect and distinguish well between them: but simple contemplation, dependent on divine light, is a secret to them." Of the Mystical Children of GOD, those on the higher plane, he writes: "Transported above everything by the sublime excess of the spirit, empty and bare, we shall assuredly realise in ourselves the perfection of the children of GOD, and experience the effusion of the Spirit without intermediary, for we shall be void of all things."<sup>1</sup>

The key to the position is contained in Baron Von Hügel's phrase "loved and lived." All the mystics insist on *love* as the atmosphere of mystical knowledge: thus S. Bonaventura wrote of mysticism as "*animi extensio in DEUM per amoris desiderium.*" "Truth may be without love, but it cannot help without it," said Richard Rolle. The Bishop of Bloemfontein wrote in a similar vein: "Mysticism, as I understand it, is the religion of experience. Mysticism, or experiential religion,

<sup>1</sup> *Reflections from the Mirror of a Mystic*, pp. 73, 74.

accepts doctrinal truths, and treats them as vital principles—principles, that is, by which men live, and which are verified by the life itself. . . . It tells us that truths are made into vital principles, when they are naturalised in us, being accepted unreservedly by the will and the affections as well as by the intellect, and being thereby transmuted into spiritual love and energy.”<sup>1</sup>

Many charges are flung lightly against Mysticism and Mystics. It is often said that Mysticism is mere sentimentalism ; mere muddleheaded incapacity to think clearly, coolly, consecutively : something which may be only silly, but is quite capable of becoming unwholesome and dangerous. And then we are pulled up short by the terse remark of the French philosopher, M. Joly, who observes curtly, “Mysticism is the love of GOD,” and adds, “Every Christian in the state of grace loves GOD, and is therefore more or less of a mystic . . . the Saint is a man whose whole life is wrapped up and permeated with the love of GOD.” And Fr. George Tyrrell, who quotes these words of M. Joly, goes on to urge in his own insistent way the absolute value of love : “We need less than formerly to be dazzled with the wonderful, and more to be drawn to the lovable. We want to be put *en rapport* with the Saints, to feel their humanity, to interpret it by our

<sup>1</sup> *Ara Cali*, Preface, p. v.



own, and thereby to realise that no miracle they ever wrought is comparable to the miracle of what they were.”<sup>1</sup> We read such words as these, in the midst of all the urgent calls of this modern bustling world ; so full as it is with efforts of all kinds, many of them mutually defeating ; so anxious as it is to be “up and doing,” to *do* something, to change this, to mend that, to cut down something else. And as the quiet phrase passes into our hearts and minds—“No miracle they ever wrought is comparable to the miracle of what they were”—our hearts sink within us. With all our activity, is there any, the barest remotest chance that *what we are* will ever be any help or inspiration to any human soul ? We know only too well what we are, and what the dreary answer must be. Possibly our friends may remember a stray phrase, some casual little kindness ; but these were too infrequent and haphazard with most of us to have left any definite impression of personality. However, it is useless and worse to “sit upon the ground and talk of worms” ; there is one way of mending these selves of ours, a way far better than that which some of us make our only one, as, in our self-examinations, we go through that tedious list of possible sins which humanity can commit :—have I done this ? have I said that ? did I leave

<sup>1</sup> *Faith of the Millions*, vol. i. p. 258.

the other undone? All that is very well in its place, and more than very well, absolutely necessary if we are to make any real advance ; but after a time and by itself it becomes unspeakably discouraging, when the answer is generally in the affirmative, and the weary and familiar faults and sins seem to grow no, or so little, less. Just at that moment of depression comes the opportunity for a directer, more immediate method. Once, upon this earth, lived Christ our LORD ; and, if we will, instead of looking so closely, so persistently and minutely at our peccant unsatisfactory selves, we can try to learn the way to look at Him, not to think, nor to reason about, but to look straight at Him.

“The Jews seek a sign, the Greeks wisdom, but the elect seek Christ crucified ; there are those who make Christ’s miracles the test of His claims, and those who see a like evidence in the wisdom of His doctrine ; and, lastly, there are those who find all His miracles lost in insignificance beside the miracle of His love.”<sup>1</sup> So it has been said.

It is those who turn this conviction to account who learn, slowly and with toil, to gaze on GOD, in love, who become at last really Mystics : for it has been said truly : “It is what we think about and what we love that matters most, and

<sup>1</sup> *Faith of the Millions*, vol. i. p. 258.

that makes us what we really are in GOD's eyes." <sup>1</sup>

No doubt, there are persons who will say at once that the direct Vision of GOD is a sheer impossibility here and now: and yet, what is impossibility? what is its essence? how can we get hold of it? It is as useless to say a thing is impossible as to say it is possible, unless we can show some ground for both statements. How do we discover what is possible or not? Surely as we discover anything else, either by finding it ourselves, or by taking it from people who have found it. In other words, it is a matter of evidence, more or less complete, according to the circumstances. The science of evidence is a matter that can be learned; we can, if we will, know what are its canons. And when we once know the canons we can apply them to all evidence. When people tell us that mystical vision is an impossibility, we must either question our own experience, or, failing that, the experience of reputable witnesses. And of such witnesses, Evelyn Underhill has said: "If we may trust the reports of the mystics—and they are reports given with a strange accent of certainty and good faith—they have succeeded where all these others have failed, in establishing immediate communications between

<sup>1</sup> *Hard Sayings*, p. 18.

the spirit of man, entangled, as they declare, amongst material things, and that 'only Reality,' that immaterial and final Being which some philosophers call the Absolute, and most theologians call GOD." <sup>1</sup>

There is the core of the matter: the mystic's claim is clear, viz. to have established "immediate communication between the spirit of man" and "the only Reality," which we call GOD. Elsewhere she has written: "Mysticism, in its pure form, is the science of ultimates, the science of union with the Absolute, and nothing else . . . the mystic is the person who attains to this union, not the person who talks about it. Not to *Know about* but to *Be* is the mark of the real practitioner." <sup>2</sup>

The Mystics' works remain: therein, they tell us of two things, viz. the "Mystic Way," and its goal, immediate Vision. Their works are open to all; the canons of evidence may be applied to them as to any other body of thought: it is not probable, if they be applied, that candid persons will arrive at any other conclusions than Miss Underhill's, that the "reports" are "given with a strange accent of certainty and good faith."

I do not propose in this paper to apply that test: my business is with the other side of the matter: I want to deal with what they tell us

<sup>1</sup> *Mysticism*, Evelyn Underhill, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

about the Way and the Vision—that is, about the path to be trodden and the goal to be gained.

But, first, there are one or two points to be remembered. The Mystics claim, it is true, to have established an immediate connexion between the spirit of man and GOD. But it is, at most, only a *re-establishment*. It is, properly viewed, a winning back of what man had, but lost. The Bishop of Bloemfontein, in the opening pages of *Ara Cæli*—a book which may well be read, and often re-read by those who desire to reach Home along the Mystic Way—points this out. It has ever been the Christian belief that GOD made man in His own image. That wonderful account of man's origin, which was given to the world by Jewish poets, and which used human language to describe the working of GOD, represents the original method of communication between the Deity and man in that incomparable suggestion which no scientific accuracy can ever supplant, or artistic skill improve, of Adam talking face to face with GOD, in the Garden, in the cool of the evening. It is quite true that the first direct mention of this mode of communication relates to a time after the Fall: it is equally evidently implied that Adam and Eve recognised the direct Voice of GOD, even as they had in the original state of innocence. But, as the old Testament narrative proceeds, the direct, the intuitive method of "knowing GOD"



becomes more and more obscured by man's growing sin : though the more holy, or, among palpable sinners, the more capable of genuine contrition, are still at times channels, as it were, to the rest of mankind ; Abraham, Moses, Balaam, the Old Prophet, Samuel among others held direct communication with GOD, yet most men, in these later times, lay bound by the chain of their sins, condemned now to hearsay—"Thus saith the LORD," as the direct Vision lessened and faded. So Dr. Chandler can write : "Sin had produced grievous and to human capacity irreparable results. Spiritually, man had forfeited his simple direct communion with GOD . . . his affections had been corrupted and dissipated . . . his will had been weakened and distracted. . . .

"Further, and from the same cause, his reason was blinded : its intuitive insight into GOD, Who is the Truth, had ceased, and it had to grope after truths by the piece-meal processes of the discursive understanding." <sup>1</sup>

Now this is a great turning of the tables on all those people who desire to exalt discursive reasoning as the greatest of man's powers : it is, according to the Bishop of Bloemfontein, but a roundabout *pis-aller* to which sinful man must have recourse because he has lost his "right reason," *i.e.*

<sup>1</sup> *Ara Cali*, pp. 2, 3.



his intuitive insight. This is nothing new, but the view the Church has always taken. S. Paul warned his Ephesian converts that having "learned Christ," that being now "renewed in the spirit of (their) mind," they must no longer walk like the unconverted Gentiles, whom he describes as "having the *understanding*<sup>1</sup> darkened, being alienated from the life of GOD through the ignorance that is in them, because of the *blindness*<sup>2</sup> of their hearts."<sup>3</sup> A few commentators translate "porosis" *hardness* instead of blindness, in this passage. But the Vulgate keeps *cæcitas*, our A.V. blindness; and a comparison with S. Paul's words to the Romans suggests that he really meant a blinded, not a merely hardened, heart: "Because that when they knew GOD, they glorified Him not as GOD, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was *darkened*."<sup>4</sup>

S. Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians seems a brief epitome of the process described by Dr. Chandler; viz. the substitution, in consequence of man's sin, of the groping understanding for the original direct vision of man's heart. Elsewhere, the Apostle insists on the heart as the organ of knowledge of divine things, *e.g.* "Having the *eye*

<sup>1</sup> Διάνοια = intellect, understanding.

<sup>2</sup> Πώρωσις = hardness, callousness, blindness.

<sup>3</sup> Eph. iv. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. i. 21.

of your heart enlightened" <sup>1</sup> (heart, not understanding, as our A.V. has it: *heart* is the word in the four earliest MSS. we possess, and the Vulgate retains it); and again, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." <sup>2</sup>

That great Latin Father and Doctor of the Church, S. Augustine, insists on the same truth in that pathetic phrase which has come echoing to us through the long ages of man's journey through the wilderness of this world: "Fecisti nos ad TE, DOMINE, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in TE." <sup>3</sup>

It may be cautious and advisable, since it is so easy to mislead, to add a word or two of elaboration. It must not be supposed that man's natural reason or discursive understanding is a valueless, much less that it is a bad, thing. Perhaps the truth has seldom been put more clearly than it was by Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical of 1879, on the Restoration of Christian Philosophy. A few quotations may clear up the matter: *e.g.* "It has been implanted in man by Nature to follow reason as the guide of his actions, and therefore if the understanding go wrong in anything, the will easily follows. Hence it comes about that wicked opinions in the understanding flow into

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. x. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Confessions of S. Augustine*, bk. i. ch. i.

human actions and make them bad. On the other hand, if the mind of man be healthy, and strongly grounded in solid and true principles, it will assuredly be the source of great blessings, both as regards the good of individuals, and as regards the commonweal." No one can justly say that man's understanding is belittled there. Again, Pope Leo wrote: "GOD did not give the light of reason in vain to the soul of man, nor does the superadded light of Faith quench, or even lessen, the strength of the understanding. Its effect is far from this. It perfects the understanding, gives it new strength, and makes it fit for greater works." And lastly: "It is plainly seen that we must accept many truths in the supernatural order which far surpass the power of any intellect. The human reason, therefore, conscious of its own weakness, must not dare to handle things greater than itself, nor to deny these truths. Again, it must not measure them by its own strength, or interpret them at its own will. Rather, let it receive them in the fullness and humility of Faith; reckoning this its greatest honour, that by the goodness of GOD it is allowed, as a handmaid and servant, to be busied about heavenly doctrines, and in a certain measure to reach them." Those three passages give, I think, a fair idea of Pope Leo's teaching on this point.

Dr. Chandler insists on the necessity of this survival in man, after his fall, of the original divine endow-

ment: he quotes William Law's plea that it was necessary because, "if Christ was to raise a new life like His own in every man, then every man must have had originally, in the inmost spirit of his life, a seed of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

And so, quite clearly, the first step in the Mystic Way must be that of Purgation. Man cannot "see GOD," because sin blinds him: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see GOD."

Man cannot be content not to "see GOD" because of that divine survival in him. And so our LORD came, not only to give His Life a ransom for many, but to show man what *holy human life is*, that he might have a pattern to guide him, a standard whereby to try his own purgative efforts.

Purgation, then, is the Mystic's first task. Acting upon this divine discontent, driven by the disillusionment—which comes to all sooner or later—disillusionment with the transitory appearances of this lower world, man sets about detaching himself from the shows of earth, sets about the hard business of purifying his own heart.

Once more, to avoid misleading, it may be well to say that the Mystic shares with the rest of us the common life of the Church. It is an error to imagine that the Catholic Mystic, at any rate, is a law to himself, and has peculiar methods of

<sup>1</sup> *Spirit of Love*, William Law, p. 31.

his own ; it is no such thing. When our LORD founded His Church, He left in It the means of grace, means which all were intended to use. No Mystic, however keen his intuition or detached his life, can cut himself off from, or in the least degree slight, those Sacraments which our LORD ordained or left in His Church as the Channels of His Grace : Baptism, whereby the soul is regenerated from original sin ; Absolution and Penance, whereby, upon repentance, it is restored from post-Baptismal sins, and the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, whereby our souls and bodies are strengthened and refreshed by the Body and Blood of Christ. The great Mystics have been the great users of the Sacraments. For example, S. Catharine of Genoa and S. Catharine of Siena were in the habit of communicating every day, and it is an attested fact that for long periods together the consecrated Host was almost their only food : I say almost, because, as Baron Von Hügel tells us, it was a Genoese custom in S. Catharine's time to administer after communion a little unconsecrated wine, as a kind of ablution ; and she also took, occasionally, a tumbler full of water or vinegar, and some pounded rock-salt. Nor did the great Mystics fall into the error of discounting the discipline of the Church. We can recall S. Teresa's humble obedience in the matter of writing her *Life*, in the Prologue whereto she writes : " As I



have been commanded and left at liberty to describe at length my way of prayer, and the workings of the grace of our LORD within me, I could wish I had been allowed at the same time to speak distinctly and in detail of my grievous sins and wicked life. But it has not been so willed. On the contrary, I am laid herein under great restraint.”<sup>1</sup> More than once, she lays emphasis on the necessity for obedience to directors: “Nevertheless, Satan has many devices, and so there is nothing more certain than that it is safer to be afraid, and always on our guard, under a learned director from whom nothing is concealed.”<sup>2</sup>

The “Censure” by Juan of Avila on the Saint’s *Life* points to the Church’s carefulness in all the difficult questions concerning raptures, visions, locutions, &c.; and the next to the last paragraph of that document sums up his advice to S. Teresa: “Go on your road, but always suspecting robbers, and asking for the right way: give thanks to our LORD, Who has given you His love, the knowledge of yourself, and a love of penance and the cross, making no account of these other things. However, do not despise them either, for there are signs that most of them come from our LORD,

<sup>1</sup> *Life of S. Teresa*, written by Herself, Prologue.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv. 18.



and those that do not come from Him will not hurt you if you ask for direction."

The troubles of Madame Guyon, and of Fénelon, who championed her, testify once more to the Church's care that individual "experience," however vivid, shall not override the general consensus of the Church. In fact, we are here confronted, as we are in all the great and real crises of life, with the difficulties of "balance," of due proportion. Speaking of the Church, Fr. Tyrrell once said, "Hers is always a sane *Via Media*. She endeavours steadily to bring every kind and type of intellect into captivity to Christ: to understand the mental forms and presuppositions of every dominant school of thought, and to utilise them for the expression and illustration of her teaching."<sup>1</sup>

These difficulties of achieving proportion cannot be minimised; they are real and great.

There are, for example, to be found among the Mystics such almost vehement expressions of individual experience as Mother Julian's: "This is the cause why that no soule is in rest till it is naughted of all things that are made; when she is wilfullie naughted for love to have him that is all, then is she able to receave ghostlie rest." Then follows the incomparable devotional outburst, "God, of Thy goodnes, give me Thyself, for

<sup>1</sup> *Faith of the Millions*, vol. i. Preface, pp. xiv. xv.

Thou art enough to me ; and I may aske nothing that is lesse, that may be fullie worship to Thee ; and if I aske anything that is lesse, ever me wanteth.”<sup>1</sup> Though in a woman of Mother Julian’s sane and humble temper, this intense sense of individualism in religion did no harm, yet left untrammelled in the Church at large it might work the anarchy of personal opinion, the endless divisions that can be consequent on private experience and private judgment.

And so we can appreciate S. Teresa’s wise insistence on the balance of the factors in the problem : “Experience is necessary throughout, so also is a spiritual director ; for when the soul has reached this point, there are many matters which must be referred to the director.”<sup>2</sup>

The same point is well elucidated in another “Censure” of S. Teresa’s *Life*, by one of the two Dominican friars whom the Inquisition appointed as “censors,” viz. Fr. Bañes. He writes the following carefully poised judgment : “Saints, both men and women, have had revelations, not only in ancient but also in modern times : such were S. Dominic, S. Francis, S. Vincent Ferrer, S. Catharine of Siena, S. Gertrude, and many others that might be named ; and as the Church of GOD is, and is to be, always holy to the end, not only because her pro-

<sup>1</sup> “Revelations of Divine Love,” *Mother Julian of Norwich*, ch. v.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of S. Teresa*, xl. 12.

fession is holiness, but because there are in her just persons and perfect in holiness, it is unreasonable to despise visions and revelations, and condemn them in one sweep, seeing they are ordinarily accompanied with much goodness and a Christian life. On the contrary, we should follow the saying of the Apostle in 1 Thess. v. 19-22: 'Spiritus nolite extinguere. Prophetias nolite spernere. Omnia [autem] probate: quod bonum est tenete. Ab omni specie mala abstinete vos.' He who will read S. Thomas on that passage, will see how carefully they are to be examined, who, in the Church of GOD, manifest any particular gift that may be profitable or hurtful to our neighbour, and how watchful the examiners ought to be, lest the fire of the Spirit of GOD should be quenched in the good, and others cowed in the practice of the perfect Christian life."

This is a point on which it is desirable to think carefully, because it is important to defend mysticism from all charges of disloyalty to Authority, and also against the somewhat common supposition that it is a chaos of sloppy sentimentality and loose, inaccurate thought. On the latter point Fr. Tyrrell scathingly observed, "For many, mysticism means simply an abandonment of all attempt to reconcile the 'religious sentiment' with intelligent thought, a deliberate yielding one's self a prey to any unchecked, unverifiable fancy or speculation, which

seems to interpret the vague yearnings of the soul after GOD."<sup>1</sup>

Such people are ignorant of or have forgotten Fr. Bañes' plea for careful examination and watchfulness in these matters. And in this, he but represented the Church's constant attitude.

Sharing thus in the common life of the Church, receiving her Sacraments, accepting her discipline, the Mystic sets to his first task upon his chosen Way, the step of Purgation, of cleansing, of utter detachment from mundane things. The question now is, what is Purgation; what does it involve? It implies something to be purged. No one reflecting on human life, its perversions and sinfulness, and on the source of these, can doubt what it is; it can only be the *will*. Here is the answer, the destructive answer, to the charge that mysticism is mere loose, shifting, soft sentimentality. In the cleansing of the will, there is no room for any such mood: it is a stern task, a stony, steep, infinitely wearisome ascent. "Man is created for GOD, and is called to become like Him. He must be stripped not only of what is contrary to GOD, but even of what is not conducive to the attainment of that high destiny. This constitutes the essence of contemplation, not visions and revelations," so wrote Dom Benedict Zimmermann, in his Introduction to *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*. In that treatise,

<sup>1</sup> *Faith of the Millions*, vol. i. p. 279.

S. John of the Cross tells us, with precision, what this purgation entails. He declares that there are certain "natural desires"—*i.e.* "those in which the rational will had no share"—which it is both impossible and unnecessary to banish completely: but all other voluntary desires, whether sins—mortal or venial—together with imperfections must be banished, "and the soul which would attain to perfect union must be delivered from them all, however slight they may be. . . . The state of divine union consists in the total transformation of the will into the will of GOD, in such a way that every movement of the will shall be always the movement of the will of GOD only. . . . If the soul cleaves to any imperfection, contrary to the will of GOD, His will is not done, for the soul wills that which GOD wills not. It is clear, therefore, that if the soul is to be united in love and will with GOD, every desire of the will must first of all be cast away, however slight it may be; that is, we must not deliberately and knowingly assent with the will to any imperfection, and we must have such power over it, and such liberty, as to reject every such desire the moment we are aware of it."<sup>1</sup>

This may seem, to most of us, an impossible height to attain. S. John of the Cross knew the subtleties of the human will, its twists, its essential

<sup>1</sup> *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, I. xi. 3.



bias towards enjoyment ; and he realised that this ideal, lofty though it seem, is not the end.

It is not, I think, false to say that we live in a self-centred age. That we are not all conscious of the fact only adds to its danger. The moment when any one of us becomes aware of it, as true, not of other people only, but piercingly and perpetually true of our own self, is painful indeed : but it has a consoling side. At least, it offers us the opportunity of beginning to end so wretched a state. For it is a miserable condition, that of referring everything, judging everything in relation to one's own self. S. John of the Cross, having quoted our LORD'S words, "If any man will come after ME, let him deny himself," adds, "Now the soul can never do this, if it has any joy in its natural endowments ; for he who has even the slightest self-esteem, neither denies himself, nor follows Christ."

*The slightest self-esteem !* Which of us dare claim even to have dreamed of really reaching so stripped a state ? To part with one's desires seems impossible enough to the majority : but to abandon the last shred of self-regarding—what of *that* ? And yet the Saint only bases his warning on those words, which are familiar—so familiar now, perhaps, that the fine edge of their meaning is lost for us—the words of our LORD to His Disciples : "If any man will come after ME, let him deny himself and take up his cross



and follow ME. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? ”

Now, this is, first of all, a general warning—“ If any man.” Then, the verb is not the future tense of *to be*, but the verb *to will* ; “ If any man wills<sup>1</sup> to come after ME : ” “ Whosoever wills to save his life shall lose it.” And, secondly, our LORD is putting before us, and S. John of the Cross so applies His teaching, not the desperate ventures of the gallant few, not the martyr’s risk, nor the confessor’s rare and shining peril, but just the plain, everyday denial by each of us of our own self-will. That possibility occurs not in the great crises of life only : it may be said without exaggeration that no hour of our life passes without offering us some scope for self-denial.

I have shown that S. John of the Cross demands the mortification of the self in the matter of mortal and venial sins ; in that of voluntary desires : and, harder still, he requires the banishment of our constantly recurring, universally pervasive self-esteem. But there is a subtler sacrifice still. In the spirit of the old proverb, *Corruptio optimi pessima*, he counsels mortification of self in spiritual things. The passage is long : but, rather than cut it, I will leave out extracts on the same lines from the

<sup>1</sup> Gr. *θελει* = wills ; Vulgate, *vult*. S. Matt. xvi. 24, 25.

writings of other Saints, and do it the more willingly because this Spanish Carmelite is, by common consent, at once a master of self-detachment, and a writer of rare penetration and effective persuasiveness. If we cannot learn from him all that can be learned from mere words of warning and counsel, I doubt our doing so by multiplication of passages culled from other writers. This, I think, is his profoundest advice on the subject of self-stripping: "This pathway up the lofty mountain of perfection, in that it ascends upwards and is strait, requires that those who climb it should carry nothing with them which shall press them downwards, or embarrass them in their ascent upwards. And as this is a matter in which we should seek and aim after GOD alone, so GOD only ought to be the sole object of our efforts.

"This clearly shows that the soul must be not only disentangled from all that belongs to the creature, but also detached and annihilated in the things of the spirit. And so our LORD teaching us, and guiding us into this road, gives us this wonderful doctrine, and which is, if I may say so, the less practised by spiritual persons the more it is necessary for them. I shall transcribe it here, because it is so necessary, and so much to the purpose, and then explain its real and spiritual meaning. 'If any man will follow ME, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow ME.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake . . . shall save it.'<sup>1</sup> Oh, that someone would teach us how to understand, practise, and feel what is involved in this profound lesson of self-denial given us by our LORD Himself, that spiritual persons may perceive how different, on this road, their conduct ought to be from that which many of them think to be right! Some consider any kind of retirement from the world, and any correction of excesses to be sufficient: others are content with a certain degree of virtue, persevere in prayer, and practise mortification, but they do not rise to this detachment, and poverty, or self-denial, or spiritual pureness—all these are one—which our Saviour here recommends, because they nourish and clothe their natural self with consolations, instead of detaching themselves therefrom, and denying themselves in all things for GOD. They think it enough to deny themselves in the things of this world, without annihilating themselves, and purging away all self-seeking in spiritual things. Hence it comes to pass, that when any of this solid devotion presents itself to them, which consists in the annihilation of all sweetness in GOD, in dryness, in distaste, in trouble, which is the real spiritual cross, and the nakedness of the spiritual poverty of Christ, they run away from it as from death

<sup>1</sup> S. Mark viii. 34, 35.

itself. They seek only for delights, for sweet communications, and satisfactions in GOD; but this is not self-denial, nor detachment of spirit, but rather spiritual gluttony. They render themselves spiritually enemies of the cross of Christ, for true spirituality seeks for bitterness rather than sweetness in GOD, inclines to suffering more than to consolation, and to be in want of everything for GOD rather than to possess, to dryness and afflictions rather than to sweet communications, knowing well that this is to follow Christ and deny self; while the other course is perhaps nothing but to seek one's self in GOD, which is the very opposite of love. For to seek self in GOD is to seek for comfort and refreshment from GOD. But to seek GOD in Himself is not only to be willingly deprived of this thing and of that for GOD, but to incline ourselves to will and choose for Christ's sake whatever is most disagreeable, whether proceeding from GOD or from the world: this is to love GOD.

"Oh who can tell us how far GOD wills that this self-renunciation should reach! In truth, it should be as death, a temporal, natural, and spiritual annihilation in all things which the will esteems: herein is all our gain. This is the meaning of our Saviour when He said, 'Whosoever will save his life shall lose it,' that is, whosoever will possess, or seek anything for himself, He shall

lose it; 'Whosoever shall lose his life for MY sake, shall save it,' that is, whosoever shall renounce for the sake of Christ whatever is pleasing to his own will, choosing rather the cross—to which our LORD referred when He said, 'He that hateth his life—he shall gain it.' "

What meaning, in a true, real, sincere sense, have these words of our LORD for most of us, who have heard them in church, and have read them to ourselves many more times than we can possibly reckon? It is instructive to remember that S. Matthew records them (in a slightly differing form) twice;<sup>1</sup> S. Mark reports the saying once, almost verbally agreeing with S. Matthew's second rendering;<sup>2</sup> and S. Luke records it once in almost identical terms, and again in a slightly changed phrase:<sup>3</sup> it cannot then have been a single utterance, one would think. Even had it been, its spirit is still the core of our LORD'S Life and Doctrine. Yet it is not too much to say, that the average common-sense of mankind, as the curious phrase has it, remains, on the whole, unmoved by this challenging Cry. "I am just an ordinary person," someone says to himself; "great things are quite out of my line," and so forth. But yet, our LORD was not addressing heroes, nor

<sup>1</sup> S. Matt. x. 38, 39; xvi. 24-26.

<sup>2</sup> S. Mark viii. 34-37.

<sup>3</sup> S. Luke x. 23-25; xiv. 27.



charting the path of great adventures: "If *any* man wills to come after ME," so it runs; and there is not one among us, not the least, nor the feeblest, who really wills to follow but is confronted with this appalling ideal.

The whole work of purgation is on the battle-field of the will: and there is only one weapon which can avail, the Mystic's sole defence, the flaming blade of Love. S. John of the Cross shall still be our guide here. Love of self is, of course, the arch-enemy in this struggle of self-stripping; base love can only be expelled by a purer passion, and so he writes: "In order to overcome our desires, and to deny ourselves in all things, our love and inclination for which are wont so to inflame the will that it delights therein, we require another and greater fire of another and nobler love—that of the Bridegroom—so that having all our joy in Him, and deriving from Him all our strength, we may gain such resolution and courage as shall enable us easily to abandon and deny all besides. . . . For the fact is that our sensual nature is influenced by such vehement desires, that if our spiritual nature were not on fire with other and nobler anxieties—anxieties for that which is spiritual—we should never overcome our natural and sensible inclinations." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, I. xiv. 2.



We must not make the mistake of supposing that the "Mystical Way" is a series of air-tight compartments. It is usual to speak of three steps, of which Purgation is necessarily the first, and Illumination and Union are the second and third: but purgation would be an impossible task if illumination never flashed, even transiently, upon the toiling soul; if union were so far away, that the soul could not even dream thereof. An instance of illumination going hand in hand with, and inciting to purgation, is to be found in the works of Blessed Angela of Foligno. She says explicitly: "In my process towards the road of Penance, I travelled by eighteen spiritual steps before I knew the imperfection of my life."<sup>1</sup> Of these steps, at least seven were visions. The following extracts explain their illuminating nature: "Seventhly, was given to me the special grace of gazing on the Cross, on which, with the eyes of the heart and the body, I beheld JESUS Christ dead for us. . . . Eighthly, there was given me, while gazing on the Cross, a further knowledge of how Christ had died for our sins; and then I recognised all my own sins, and realised that I had crucified Him. . . . In the knowledge of the Cross that I then had, I received such a fire of love and compunction, that, standing by the Cross, I stripped myself in resolution of everything, and

<sup>1</sup> *Catholic Mysticism*, by Algar Thorold, p. 90.

offered Him my whole self. . . . I was illuminated and instructed, and the Way of the Cross was made known to me in the following manner. For it was revealed to me that if I wished to go to the Cross, I should strip myself so as to travel thither more lightly and more freely ; in other words, that I should forgive all who had offended me, and that I should strip myself of all earthly things, of all men and women, friends and relations, and of possessions and of my very self, and give my heart to Christ, Who had conferred on me such great benefits as I have mentioned, and thus walk over a road of thorns—a road, that is, of tribulation. And so I began to give up good clothes and dresses and delicate food, and also head-dresses.”

But though in some cases all the steps are taken, yet, for many of us, purgation may be not only what it must be for all, viz. the first step, but it may prove, in this life at any rate, to be the only one we take. To the extent of endeavouring to deny ourselves for the sake of “the only Fair,” to that extent we are all, so far as we are the least bit in earnest, mystics. If we once set out on that mountainous path, climbing over the stones, disregarding the thorns, hurrying by the pleasant flowers of desire, and the fruit of easy achievement, we shall not for long labour under the delusion that the “Mystic Way” is a primrose path of emotional ease and indulgence. But just

because this hard and strait way is the unavoidable path of every single soul which sets its face towards Home, it seemed worth while to spend most time upon it. Those who are still unsatisfied may turn to Miss Underhill's *Mysticism* (pt. ii. ch. iii.) with its wealth of quotations from many saintly mystics, and to the first five chapters, so appealing in their simplicity, of Dr. Chandler's *Ara Cæli*.

The second step, so far as any division can be made, is that of *Illumination*. We shall do well to recall Dom Zimmermann's words, already quoted, to the effect that self-stripping, purgation of the will "constitutes the essence of contemplation, not visions and revelations." By Illumination, the Mystics mean the apprehension of *reality* instead of *appearance*; as Miss Underhill expresses it: "That world which we have distorted by identifying it with our own self-regarding arrangement of its elements, has got to reassume for us the character of Reality, of GOD. In the purified sight of the great Mystics it did reassume this character: their shells were opened wide, they knew the tides of the Eternal Sea."<sup>1</sup>

There are two phases of Illumination; interior, when the reality of the self is apprehended, and exterior, when the reality of GOD and His universe is grasped.

<sup>1</sup> *Mysticism*, Evelyn Underhill, p. 240.

In her chapter on the *Illumination of the Self* Miss Underhill gives many beautiful quotations about Illumination from the Mystics: these are at the service of all who care to possess themselves of the book. I will not even take from her pages the passage from Angela of Foligno, which she declares to be "unique in the literature of mysticism." If S. John of the Cross be admittedly the classic writer on Purgation, surely it is to Ruysbroeck that we should turn for teaching about Illumination? What can surpass the following, which in a single passage deals with the interior and exterior phases: "Wherefore he who wills to understand this, must die to himself and live in GOD; he must set his face towards the eternal light in the depths of his inmost self, there, where hidden truth shows itself immediately. Because the Heavenly Father would have us to be "seers," because He is the Father of Light, wherefore, to the secret core of our inmost being, He utters immediately, unhindered, one unique, abysmal word, and no other. In that word, He utters Himself and all things. And the word is no other than SEE." <sup>1</sup>

Of the last step, Union, it is difficult to write. In its fullness it is, of course, not a state attained in this world. Yet, as we pass in review the long

<sup>1</sup> *L'Ornement des Noces Spirituelles*, Johann Ruysbroeck, bk. iii. ch. i.

line of the Saints, we see that the real secret of their final success in seemingly hopeless circumstances, of their perpetually springing hopefulness in the face of apparently overwhelming odds, is to be found in the fact that they being "pure in heart" *saw* GOD; and seeing Him were irrevocably bound to Him, irrevocably enlisted in His service. There is a wonderful passage in S. Catharine of Siena's *Treatise of Prayer*, where GOD the Father shows the Saint how "Union" can be accomplished, in a sense, even in this world, shows her too the intolerable longing of the human soul to escape, and yet its willingness to endure to the end in the active service of GOD and men: "The soul of Paul was clothed, through feeling and union, in ME, Eternal Father, like the blessed ones in Eternal Life, except that his soul was not separated from his body, except through this feeling and union. But it being pleasing to My Goodness to make of him a vessel of election in the abyss of ME, Eternal Trinity, I dispossessed him of Myself, because on ME can no pain fall, and I wished him to suffer for My Name; therefore I placed before him, as an object for the eyes of his intellect, Christ crucified, clothing him with the garment of His doctrine, binding and fettering him with the clemency of the Holy Spirit, and inflaming him with the fire of charity. He became a vessel, disposed and reformed by My Goodness, and, on



being struck, made no resistance, but said: '*My Lord, what dost Thou wish me to do? Show me that which it is Thy pleasure for me to do, and I will do it.*'"<sup>1</sup>

What is this but the final surrender in our Lady's supreme Hymn, which became the Song of Humanity's hope, the surrender of her acquiescence, "Be it unto me according to Thy word"? And then S. Catharine is taught more of this desire to go and willingness to remain: "Nevertheless, as their will is not their own, but becomes one with Mine, they cannot desire other than what I desire, and though they desire to come and be with ME, they are contented to remain, if I desire them to remain, with their pain, for the greater praise and glory of MY Name and the salvation of souls. . . . These not only endure with patience . . . but they glory, through MY Name, in bearing much tribulation. . . . the eye of the intellect is lifted up and gazes into my Deity, when the affection behind the intellect is nourished and united with ME. This is a sight which I grant to the soul, infused with grace, who, in truth, loves and serves me."<sup>1</sup>

This, one might say, deals with the activity of the unitive life, the state of those who, like S. Paul, or S. Ignatius, or S. Catharine of Siena herself, have turned the current of human affairs away from its

<sup>1</sup> *A Treatise of Prayer*, p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 180, 181.



mundane end to GOD. It is the activity too of the beneficent, like S. Francis, or of those

“Who carry music in their heart,  
Through dusty lane and wrangling mart,  
Plying their daily task with busier feet,  
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.”

And then there is that other moment, when activity, for a while, ceases, and the holy soul is, for a space, alone with GOD. I will content myself with just two quotations, one of longing, the other of attainment. The first is homely English, Mother Julian's incomparable prayer, as, with vehement desire, she begged the boon of the Vision of, the Union with, GOD :

“GOD, of Thy goodnes, give me Thyself, for Thou art enough to me ; and I may aske nothing that is lesse, that may be fullie worship to Thee ; and if I aske anything that is lesse, ever me wanteth. But onlie in Thee I have all.”<sup>1</sup>

Lastly there is Ruysbroeck's matchless description of the state of union, of attainment : “Wherefore interior men, contemplatives, will, according to the nature of their contemplation, pass beyond reason, beyond differences, beyond their created selves, by means of an eternal intuition. Thanks to that innate Light, they are wholly changed, and they are united to that very

<sup>1</sup> *Revelations of Divine Love showed to Mother Julian of Norwich*, edited by Fr. George Tyrrell, p. 14.

Light, by which they see, and which they see. Thus do contemplatives pursue the eternal Image in Whose Likeness they were fashioned ; and they contemplate GOD and all things in one, in an open Vision bathed in divine Light.”<sup>1</sup>

These, then, are the “three steps,” or stages, upon the Mystic Way—Purgation, Illumination, Union. The first is that over which, as human creatures, endowed with wills, we have some measure at least of choice and control ; it is too that of which every human being has, or has had, urgent need. It is, no doubt, so far as our efforts, so far as the exertion of will, are concerned, the hardest ; but there is something consoling in the fact that the hardest should have been committed thus far to our choice. The Vision of GOD is not ours to command : Union with Him is the starry reward of the Saints, who have attained : but to will our own cleansing is not put beyond our reach. Difficult, often drab and dreary, it is the absolute pre-essential to the other two : it is a task ever before us, always present with us. Few perhaps would reckon Matthew Arnold among the Mystics, and yet a stanza of his might serve not inadequately for a brief account of our state here as we strive after the direct Vision of GOD :

<sup>1</sup> *L'Ornement des Noces Spirituelles*, Johann Ruysbroeck, bk. iii. ch. v.

“ We cannot kindle when we will  
The fire which in the heart resides ;  
The spirit bloweth and is still,  
In mystery our soul abides.  
But tasks in hours of insight will'd  
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.”

I have quoted from M. Joly the words : “ Every Christian in the state of grace loves GOD, and is herefore more or less of a mystic.” I have urged that so far as we honestly try, at Christ's call, to take up our cross, we have embarked on the Mystic Way. But lest anyone should still persist that mysticism is only for the few, I will quote the remarkable statement of Thomas à Kempis : “ Ego, inquit Dominus, docui prophetas ab initio, *et usque nunc non cesso omnibus loqui.*”<sup>1</sup> And if they still persist that that is only a manner of speaking, and that the direct Vision of GOD is, for the majority, impossible here and now, then we must ask if they have forgotten the Sacraments, and in particular the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar ?

<sup>1</sup> *Imitatio*, III. iii. § 3.



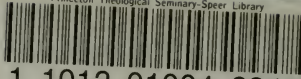
- Selfly Devotion (at 13) and on stage
- The modern defect 24
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  - 1 - The ascetic discipline.
  - 2 - Christian gaiety (like the Puritans)
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  - 4 - The undisturbed ending
  - 5 - Direct knowledge
  - 6 - The chief miracle
  - 7 - Experience the only test of possibility
  - 12 - Revelations admitted







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